Commentary
Volume Sixty, Number Six, December 1975

ANTI-AMERICANISM AT HOME AND ABROAD

Henry Fairlie

THE SLAVERY DEBATE

Stanley M. Elkins

A Literary Approach to the Bible
Robert Alter

Our Contemporary, William James
William Barrett

From the Warsaw Ghetto
Yitzhak Zuckerman

Fiction: Kosinski and Michaels
Hilton Kramer

Books in Review: Thomas Sowell / David Stern / Michael J. Malbin / Joseph Shattan / Samuel Lipman

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Commentary

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COMMENTARY is published monthly by the American Jewish Committee—Single copy is $1.50, $15 a year; 3 years $40; 5 years $60—Add $4.00 per year for all foreign, including Canada and Latin America—Second class postage paid at New York, N.Y. and at additional mailing offices.

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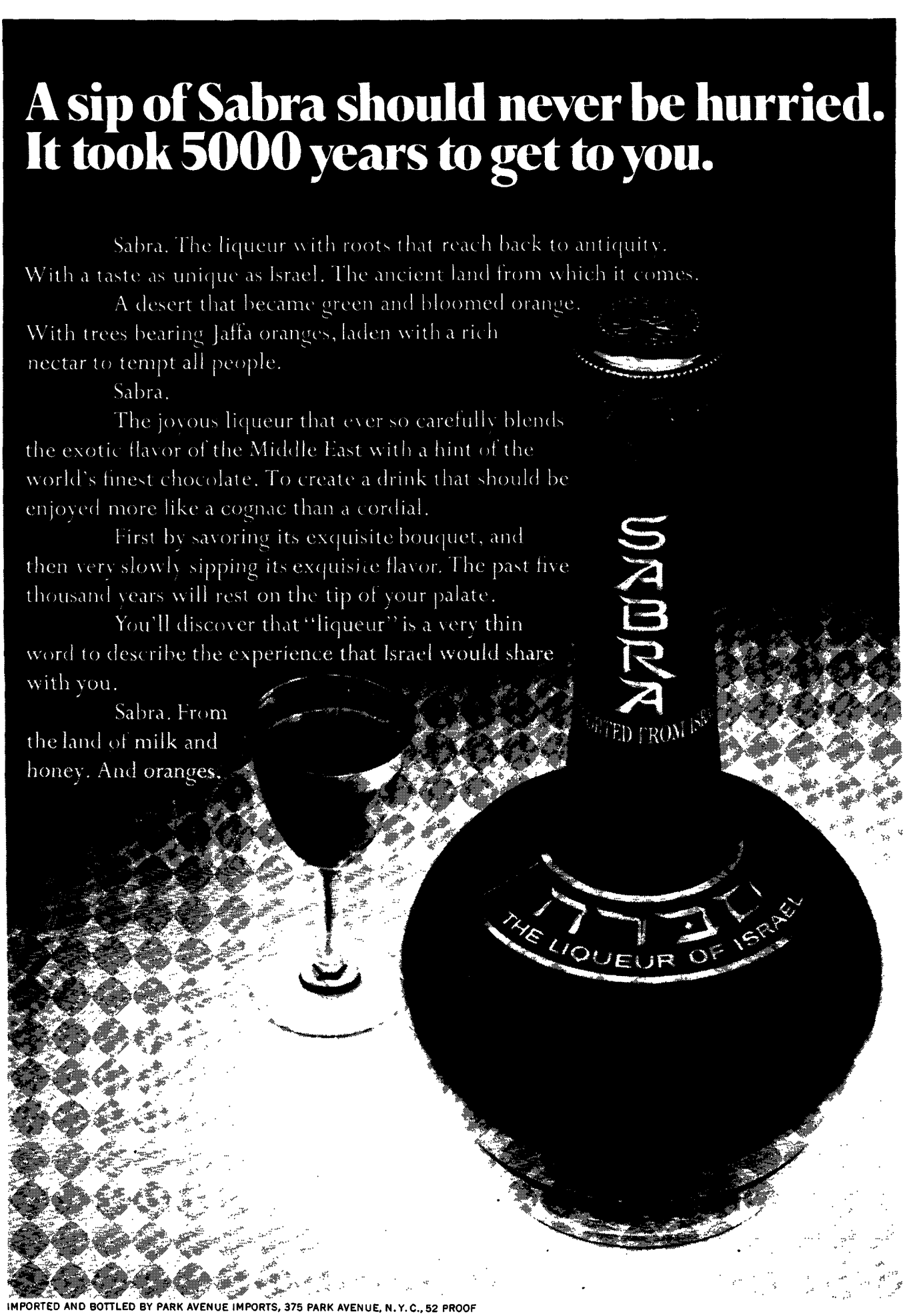

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Letters from Readers

"Was Alger Hiss Guilty?"

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The article concerning Alger Hiss written by my good friend and former colleague, Irving Younger ["Was Alger Hiss Guilty?," August], reveals that Mr. Younger has completed his remetamorphosis from judge to college professor; for his article well illustrates some distinctions to be drawn between the professor and the judge.

Mr. Younger has examined the trial record of *United States* v. *Alger Hiss* and from thousands of pages of cold type he has discerned truth: Hiss was guilty. Such speculation followed by absolute certainty is the envied prerogative, indeed the joy, of the academician, particularly when the conclusions are presented with Mr. Younger's grace, wit, and style. But Judge Younger would not have been likely to reach so positive a conclusion, especially from merely reading a record.

If there is anything that distinguishes the judge, it is the disciplined humility of knowing that truth may escape him. My colleagues who still tell juries that the trial is a search for the truth usually neglect to tell them the remainder: there is no guarantee that they will find it. For all we learn is what witnesses choose to tell us, and the only witnesses we hear are those the parties and their lawyers choose to call.

The humility of which I write lies not only in understanding the limitations of the adversary system but in recognizing the judicial role: to provide a neutral arena in which the combatants may fairly meet, to enforce the rules of fair combat by which the issues may be adjudicated, and to set and enforce the rigorous criteria which must be met before a verdict of "Guilty" may be pronounced.

But who can walk away from the trial—much less the transcript—always certain that truth has been ascertained? Not the judge, I fear.

[Justice] MARTIN B. STECHER
Supreme Court of the State
of New York
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Irving Younger is right when he says that "It is time to think again about Alger Hiss." Twenty-five years after his perjury conviction, Hiss has achieved a measure of rehabilitation in his recent readmission to the Massachusetts bar, but the judges of the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts, in their unanimous decision, noted that "we consider him to be guilty as charged" in his original conviction. So this action, sweet as it must be to Hiss, does not resolve the continuing controversy about the validity of his conviction.

What prompts this response to Mr. Younger's article is my puzzlement that so much space should be devoted to a piece based "almost entirely upon the transcripts, the exhibits, and the briefs" in the case, with "no new information to offer and hence no revelations to make." This seems analogous to a discussion of the assassinations of the Kennedys or Martin Luther King based exclusively on the reports of the Warren Commission or court records. Granted, the evidence and speculations subsequently produced in those cases do not prove definitively the existence of conspiracies or the innocence of the presumed assassins, but reasonable doubts have been raised which must be taken into account in a contemporary review of those events.

Similarly, I would argue, a close reading of the transcripts in the Hiss case and examination of the recently-released FBI and State Department documents raise a "reasonable doubt" about the validity of the evidence used to convict Hiss. Let me preface a response to specific evidentiary points raised by Mr. Younger with a brief account of the current status of the attempts to secure access to the crucial records in the case, those of the FBI, the Justice Department, State Department, and the House Committee on Un-American Activities (now controlled by the House Judiciary Committee).

In July 1973, Attorney General Elliot Richardson responded to a request from Smith College historian Allen Weinstein and ordered the FBI and Justice Department to release the records in the Hiss and Rosenberg cases. The FBI, acting more like a sovereign state than a subordinate agency of the Justice Department, resisted disclosure of its files and so far has released only

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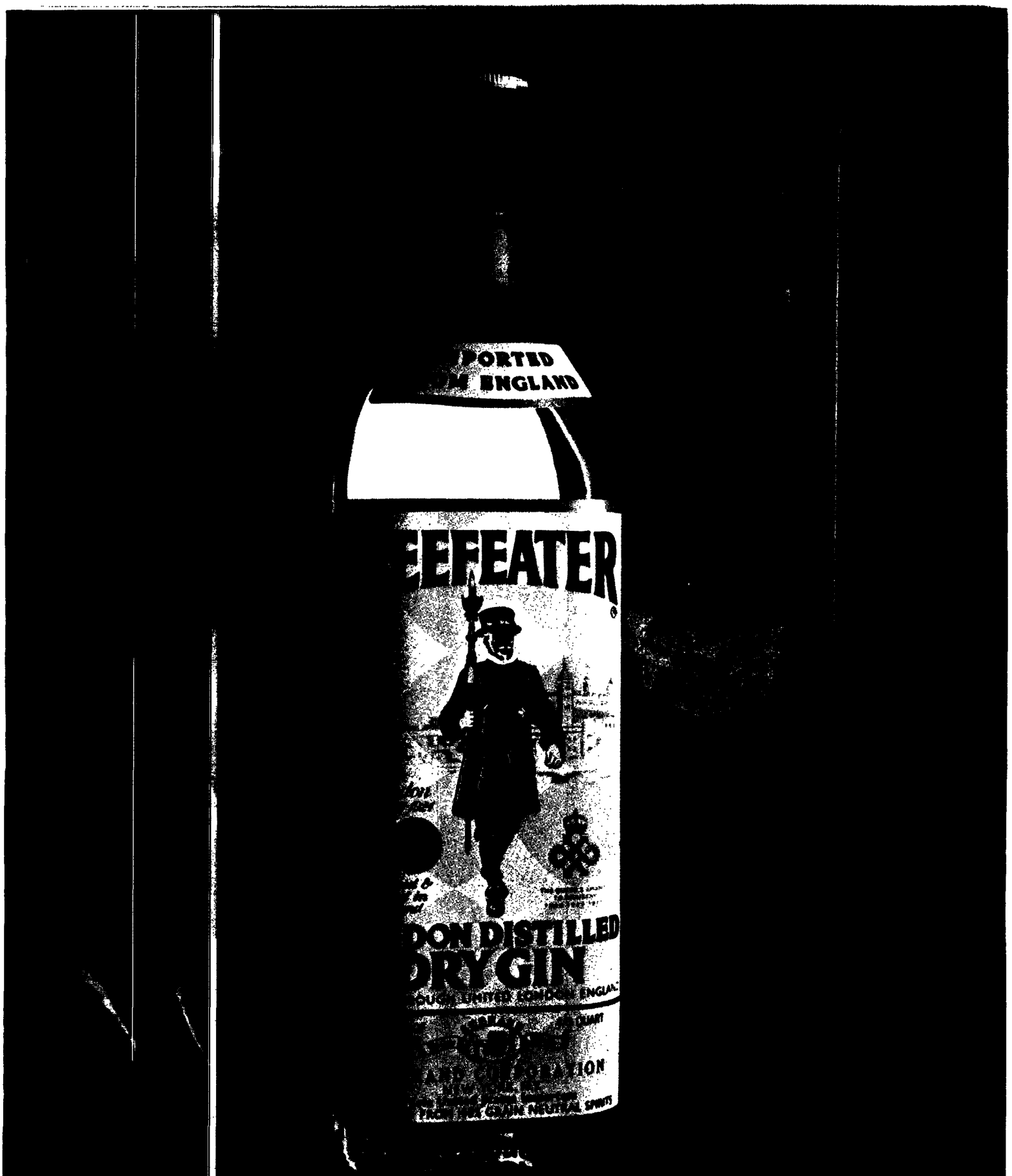

Sometimes, it's the gift that counts.

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about 500 of the 53,000 pages of Hiss case files.

However, in February 1975, the Watergate-prompted amendments to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) took effect and a number of Hiss case researchers, including Weinstein, myself, Hiss, writer William Reuben and economist Stephen Salant, promptly filed suit in various federal courts for crucial documents. I have also received significant documents from the security files of the State Department, and have asked members of the House Judiciary Committee to sponsor a resolution releasing the HUAC files relating to the Hiss case. Between them, these suits and FOIA requests should produce the crucial Hiss case records in the next few months.

Even without these documents, it is possible to raise "reasonable doubt" about the evidence cited by Mr. Younger as conclusive proof of Hiss's guilt. Mr. Younger concludes that, of the ten major issues raised at the trials, only one "proves beyond any reasonable doubt" that Hiss was lying about the basic charge on which the perjury indictment was based. This is the question as to whether the 65 pages of State Department documents turned over by Chambers in Baltimore on November 17, 1948 (during the taking of depositions in Hiss's libel suit against Chambers) were typed on the famous Woodstock typewriter owned by Hiss.

The amazing thing about the Woodstock typewriter is that it was introduced as a *defense* exhibit at the trials. Producing the "smoking gun" (or what prosecutor Thomas Murphy called the "immutable witness") at the trial would seem to indicate either incredible naiveté on Hiss's part or assurance that it would prove his innocence. The history of this typewriter, and the subsequent questions about its authenticity, are crucial to the case. Very briefly, Hiss testified that he had given it to the sons of his maid in late 1937 or early 1938, before all of the documents produced by Chambers could have been typed on it. As soon as Chambers turned over the documents, a nationwide search for the typewriter began, with sixty-odd FBI agents looking for it. It finally was located by Hiss's lawyers in May 1949. It had undeniably been manufactured some time in 1929, and bore a serial number of 230,099.

What now seems evident is that the FBI, during its search for the typewriter, concluded that the *real* Hiss typewriter could not have been the one introduced at the trials. The FBI located the salesman who sold the typewriter to Hiss's father-in-law (who had given it to Hiss around 1930), discovered that he had resigned from the typewriter company in late 1927, and noted in a report (which was not introduced at the trials) that "it would appear, therefore, that the serial number of the typewriter . . . would be less than 177,000." The typewriter found by Hiss, then, could not be the one on which the incriminating documents were typed, if they were typed on the original Hiss typewriter. And if they were typed on Woodstock 230,099, then both the documents and typewriter must have been forged later than 1938 to match the "Hiss standards" (the letters undeniably typed by Mrs. Hiss on the original Woodstock). All of which is obviously confusing, but the FBI report seriously questions the provenance of the typewriter and the authenticity of the documents turned over by Chambers.

Another facet of the typewriter controversy reveals a weakness in Mr. Younger's evidentiary conclusion. He asserts that "the government was able to prove that it [the 230,099 Woodstock] was the machine on which the documents had been typed" because "every typewriter's type is, like a fingerprint, unique." At the time of the trials this was accepted as gospel, and explains the failure of Hiss's lawyers to cross-examine the FBI expert, Ramos Feehan, who testified on the similarities of type of the two sets of documents (the State Department documents produced by Chambers and the "Hiss standards"). We now know that this central assumption of Mr. Younger's argument was false. H. Montgomery Hyde, in his book *Room 3603*, documented the expertise of the OSS (the wartime precursor of the CIA) in typewriter forgery, which was utilized against the Germans.

Knowing that supposedly unique typewriters *could* be forged, and demonstrating that the Hiss typewriter *was* in fact a forgery, obviously do not follow. After Hiss was

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One of a series of reports on the first hundred years of the telephone.

The Bell System didn't just happen. It was planned, right from the start.

Thanks to Alexander Graham Bell, all nations have telephones. Thanks to Theodore Newton Vail, the United States has the world's best telephone system.

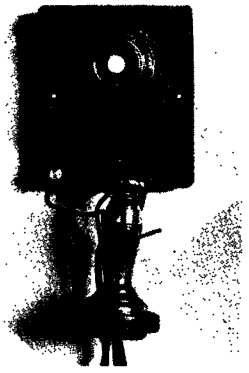
Alexander Graham Bell

Theodore Newton Vail

Theodore Newton Vail was the first General Manager of the Bell Telephone Company. He was hired in 1878, when the telephone was two years old, and 10,755 sets were in service, most of them in the Northeast. His vision of what the new invention could become equaled Bell's own.

Both men saw that the success of the infant telephone industry depended on offering customers an integrated nationwide telephone system. The goal, as Vail later phrased it, was "one policy, one system, universal service." "The strength of the Bell System," he wrote, "lies in this universality."

Vail's economic insight was remarkable for his day. He was managing a new kind of enterprise, one of the first of what we now call technological industries. He saw that technology gave birth to the telephone, and that technology also imposed new requirements on the managers of the business. Manufacturing telephones required a large commitment of capital, for specialized factories. Improving the telephone required coordination of research efforts, plus more capital for laboratories. Marketing the telephone successfully required reasonable assurance that supply and demand would keep pace with each other. Vail realized that the only way those requirements could be met was for management to plan every step of the enterprise, from sources of supply to customer orders.



Vail's ability to plan turned Bell's invention into the best telephone system in the world.

Contrast the case of the manager of a simpler business—a small bakery, for instance. The manager has great freedom. If cake doesn't sell, he can bake bread. If white bread doesn't sell, he can bake rye. There is no need to commit large sums of capital, since the same ovens serve for all three products. No research effort is required, since the recipes are well known. If the price of flour goes up, the manager can raise the price of bread immediately. If demand varies, he can bake more bread or

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The predecessor of Bell Telephone Laboratories: the Bell company's Mechanical Department in the 1880's.

less. The technological industry, by its very nature, lacks such flexibility.

The first telephones were made in a Boston machine shop. Demand soon outstripped capacity, and firms in several cities were licensed to make sets under the Bell patents. Vail wanted closer integration of manufacture, to assure the company's service objectives. In 1881, the Bell company acquired controlling interest in the Western Electric Company of Chicago, and in 1882, made that company the manufacturer of Bell equipment.

This arrangement was desirable for a number of technical reasons: quality, reliability, standardization. Vail also had a strong managerial reason. The Bell company's business was providing telephone *service*. Success depended on having a dependable supply of quality equipment needed for the service, at a reasonable cost. By integrating manufacturing within the Bell company, Vail took a long step toward that goal.

At this point the groundwork was laid for a nationwide network. In 1884 the first Boston to New York line proved that commercial long distance telephony was possible—and profitable. Vail and his associates organized an additional company, whose corporate charter put Vail's dream in black and white. Its business was to be "constructing, buying, owning, leasing or otherwise obtaining, lines...and equipment, using, operating or otherwise maintaining, the same....The lines of this association...will connect one or more points in each and every city, town or place, in...the United States, Canada and Mexico, and also by cable and other appropriate means with the rest of the known world...."

Despite all the progress made, Vail saw a basic threat to the industry. Although it was growing, the quality of the service it provided was deteriorating. Some of the earliest equipment needed to be replaced. Rapid expansion was causing growing pains. Vail knew these service problems must be dealt with. But the Boston financiers who determined company policy felt their primary duty was to maximize profit for investors. The financiers represented the thinking of the day; once again Vail's ideas were decades ahead of his time. In 1887, Vail felt compelled to resign. For the next twenty years, he followed telephone developments as an interested outsider.

In 1893 and 1894, the Bell telephone patents expired. New telephone companies sprang up almost overnight, many of them in cities already served by Bell companies. Since the wires of the new companies did not connect with Bell wires, their subscribers could not talk with Bell subscribers. In order to be in touch with all the telephones in town, stores and offices had to have two telephones. That meant two directories, two sets of wires—and two bills. Nevertheless, demand for all telephones was soaring.

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Broadway and John Street, New York City, 1890. Vail succeeded in getting the city's wires put underground.

The new companies grew, the Bell affiliated companies grew, the confusion grew.

Growth brought financial problems. Earnings, handsome as they were, were insufficient to finance such rapid expansion. (The telephone industry is a capital intensive industry.) Bell management borrowed more and more money from big banks. By 1907, lenders were getting hard to find. Then came the Panic of 1907. To protect their interests, the bankers demanded that telephone management invite Vail back to run things. Vail accepted the invitation. That year there were 3,132,000 Bell telephones in service.

Vail's return to command restored the financial community's confidence in the Bell company, so towering was the reputation he had built. Improving the quality of the service was his first concern. He made sure that concern was understood by Bell people throughout the land. Thanks to their efforts, and investment in needed equipment, service improved.

Further improvement depended on improving telephone technology. Research was going on in various parts of the company, in various cities. To encourage better planning and coordination, Vail unified the research effort. And he directed the researchers to examine at once a new device, the audion tube invented by Dr. Lee De Forest. Working with De Forest, telephone researchers developed the vacuum tube electronic amplifier, which greatly extended the range of long distance service, and led in time to commercial radio and television.

Duplicate telephone companies in various towns were incompatible with good service. Waterworks and electric companies were recognized as "public utilities," granted exclusive franchises for geographical areas. Vail believed that same reasoning applied to the telephone industry. He set out to eliminate the duplication by buying out the rival companies where that was possible, or selling out to them in some towns if that was the only way. In 1913, as a step toward universal service, he agreed to allow the independent (non-Bell) companies to use the Bell long distance lines.

Now Vail could speak confidently of a *telephone system* rather than a large number of isolated, unconnected telephone companies. He was the first to use the phrase "Bell System." He could look to the day when telephone service would be well within the means of the average American. And that gave him the final element in his planning: he could make long-range estimates of the needs of his customers.

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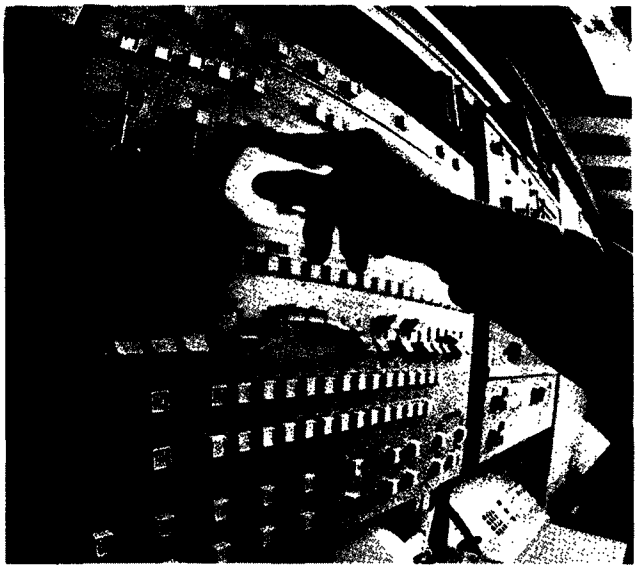
The chain was complete: research and development, an efficient source of supply in the Western Electric Company and total responsibility for installation, maintenance and repair in the local companies.

Because Vail could plan in this way, the company could invest the necessary millions in equipment for current needs, and in research for predictable future growth.

The Bell System continues today in the pattern Vail set. Not as a matter of tradition, but because the concept works. We are planning today American telephone service for the 21st Century. Western Electric and the associated Bell Companies are installing new electronic switching systems nationwide, which make possible many additional telephone services. Scientists and engineers at Bell Laboratories, birthplace of the first electrical digital computer and the transistor, are working now on new technology to transmit telephone calls on a beam of light, to handle calling volumes expected by the year 2000.

Research, manufacturing, operations —one Bell System, a planned approach that works. Efficiency and productivity are well ahead of the average for all other



Electronic switching systems, a thousand times faster than the equipment they replace, are now being installed across the nation.

industries, the system is the best in the world. There are two tests you can make yourself to see if the Bell System really works: Compare telephone prices to the price of almost anything else over the past twenty-five years. Long distance service is one of the few things that have hardly gone up at all. Other telephone services have gone up far less than the price of almost anything else you buy. The economics of a planned telephone system have surely been to the customer's benefit. What about the service? Well, just pick up your telephone. Call any number in the United States.

The best telephone system in the world didn't just happen. It was planned that way.

One Bell System. It works.

Bell System

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in prison, and after the trial record was complete, his lawyers considered this possibility and went to great expense to construct a duplicate machine (and opinions still vary as to the success of this experiment). The judge considering this motion on appeal was not impressed. However, a promising lead in the continuing investigation of the case is the assertion of a former private investigator hired by Hiss's lawyers in 1948 to investigate Chambers that he had been hired by a high OSS official to arrange the fabrication of a forged typewriter in the Hiss case.

My own research has shown that this private investigator was a former OSS agent, and that while he was working for Hiss he was also meeting with FBI agents and, in the words of an FBI report released to me, claiming to be "cooperating with the Justice Department" in very mysterious inquiries about the typewriter. One part of my Freedom of Information suit against the FBI seeks further records of his relationship with the government. At the least, those parts of his story I have corroborated indicate that the possibility of typewriter forgery should not be dismissed out of hand. . . .

It is hardly surprising that basing himself solely on the trial transcripts Mr. Younger agrees with twenty of the twenty-four jurors on Hiss's guilt. But those trials took place in a bitter atmosphere; Joe McCarthy seized Hiss's conviction as an opportunity to give a name to an era. I would suggest, contrary to Mr. Younger, that the cold war is *not* over, that his article is perhaps a recrudescence of the lingering struggle between the cold-war liberals and the popular-front liberals, of which the Hiss case was a major battle, and that the recent research on the Hiss case and the pending release of FBI and other government files might provide COMMENTARY with an opportunity for a reassessment of the Hiss case in the broader context of the generation since the trials.

PETER H. IRONS
Department of Political Science
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, Massachusetts

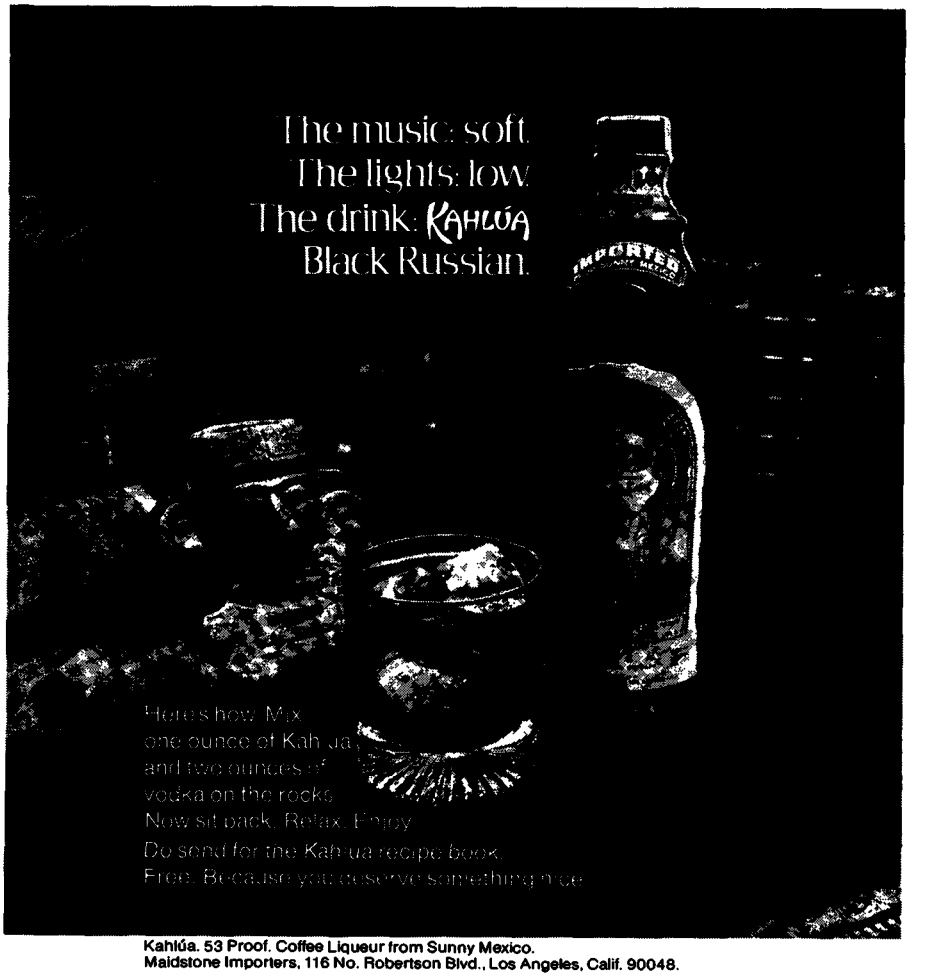
TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The Winter number of the *Virginia Quarterly Review* will enable readers to judge whether my review of issues in the Hiss case is more persuasive than Irving Younger's "Was Alger Hiss Guilty?" Meanwhile, the following defects in Mr. Younger's presentation of the case deserve attention:

1) *Equivocal purpose.* As an expert in trial techniques, Mr. Younger seems through much of his article to be concentrating on evidence actually presented during Hiss's second trial, and to be demonstrating how jurors could reasonably have voted to convict Hiss of perjury. At other times, and emphatically toward the end, Mr. Younger urges us to accept his own belief that Hiss was guilty. For the latter purpose, Mr. Younger ought to have paid much more attention than he acknowledges to the narratives published by Chambers, Hiss, and Nixon, and to the HUAC transcripts. He gives nearly an entire page, for example, to the prosecutor's brilliantly effective attack on the testimony of psychiatrists whom the defense called to evaluate "Chambers's mental state," but he concludes that section with a merely technical comment: "It was good sport, and when the jury retired to deliberate, I doubt that Dr. Binger's testimony played any part at all."

Mr. Younger never mentions Chambers's own account (in *Witness*, pp. 717-75) of emotional distress so extreme between August and December 1948 that it culminated in a suicide attempt after Chambers had decided that God and the world—unprepared to accept his self-destructive exposé of Communism—were against him. The jury did not know of that episode, and of course neither an actual suicide attempt nor an imaginary account of one makes a man a pathological liar. But Mr. Younger has not given readers a fair account of the relevant facts concerning Chambers's mental state. Indeed he has misled them by quoting the prosecutor's carefully phrased denial that Chambers had undergone institutional confinement or medical treatment except for his teeth and heart.

2) *Factual errors and the omission of important facts.* The most serious error here is Mr. Younger's statement that "Rosen's signature appears on the purchaser's application for a new certificate of title" to Hiss's 1929 Ford. Actually, both



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Rosen and his wife swore before HUAC that the signature was not Rosen's, and their testimony was confirmed by the Committee's handwriting expert and by the obviously astonished official (of the Cherner Motor Company) in whose handwriting the signature was mysteriously written. Mr. Younger says he cannot "see how a jury, presented with these documents, could disbelieve Chambers" about the transfer of Hiss's Ford. Yet he neglects to report the version, to which Chambers originally swore, *before* the Cherner Company's name was found on the documents. That version differed strikingly from the documented facts.

On Mr. Younger's seventh and eighth items, the rug and the alleged loan of $400 to pay for Chambers's four-door sedan, similarly relevant information is withheld. Since Chambers's credibility is at issue, Mr. Younger should have reported that *Mrs.* Chambers had sworn that the money for the car had come from a relative (not from Hiss), and it would have been only fair to report that in many hours of testimony over a period of months Chambers had never mentioned the alleged loan—until the FBI had obtained Hiss's bank records, which at least made it possible to exploit a coincidence.

In discussing the rug Mr. Younger neglects to mention the positive testimony of a former servant that the rug Hiss admitted having received from Chambers was in Hiss's house months before Meyer Schapiro bought the four rugs in New York. Mr. Younger also notes that Hiss's lawyer failed to cross-examine Mr. Schapiro—as though the truth of Mr. Schapiro's testimony invalidated the testimony of Hiss and the unmentioned former servant. Even some of the most skeptical critics of Hiss's testimony (one of them a law professor at Stanford) have felt obliged to underline a fact that any professor of trial techniques ought at least to have mentioned: the prosecuting attorney never subpoenaed Hiss's rug so that the dealer might be asked to identify it as one of the four he had sold to Mr. Schapiro. Instead the prosecutor sneered at the defense for *its* failure to introduce the rug and ask the dealer—a prosecution witness—that question. Mr. Younger mentions none of this. He simply assumes that of course there could not have been five rugs, four of which had nothing to do with Hiss.

3) *Neglect of Chambers's false and contradictory testimony.* Mr. Younger argues that except for the strong circumstantial evidence the main issue was the credibility of Chambers and Hiss. He does deal briefly and uncritically with Chambers's repeated, perjurious denials of espionage. Yet he ignores the flat contradictions and gratuitous errors of fact in Chambers's other early testimony before HUAC, testimony given (so far as we know) before Chambers began to meet regularly with FBI agents and before Hiss had the chance to correct the most flagrant inaccuracies. Mr. Younger declares that "Chambers's knowledge of Hiss's personal life is irrelevant to the charge of perjury." Chambers's testimony about Hiss's personal life is relevant, however, to the question of Chambers's credibility. . . .

4) *Neglect of HUAC's role in the case.* Mr. Younger mentions Richard Nixon's recent disgrace at the beginning of his article, but only to ridicule any imputations of Nixonian fraud in the Hiss case. He says nothing of Congressman Nixon's admitted role in making sure that Hiss and not Chambers was indicted for perjury, and he says nothing about Nixon's publicly threatening attack upon the rulings and fitness of the judge who presided at Hiss's first trial. Mr. Younger's silence about the margin by which the grand jury voted to indict Hiss would deserve our respect if the article did not twice emphasize the eight-to-four majority for conviction in the jury that failed to reach a verdict at Hiss's first trial. In his summation Mr. Younger reminds us that twenty out of twenty-four jurors at the two trials voted to convict Hiss—as if all the jurors had heard the same case under the same judicial rulings. He does not tell us that after Nixon's attack on the first judge the new judge assigned to the second trial ruled differently on several key issues about which Nixon and others had complained, or that the day after Nixon's public demand for an indictment of Hiss but not of Chambers the grand jury voted—by a majority of one—to indict Hiss.

I agree with Mr. Younger that the heart of the case against Hiss is the circumstantial evidence concerning the typewriter and the typewritten documents. One's attitude toward the two chief antagonists and the earlier evidence, however, will strongly influence one's reading of the troubling, sometimes mysterious evidence concerning both the typewriter and the defense attorneys' frustrating search for records concerning its manufacture, after Hiss was already in prison. Disagreement about the verdict is still possible. I find it saddening to learn that twenty-five years after Hiss's conviction a professor of law could not make a fairer and more accurate statement of Hiss's side of the case.

DAVID LEVIN
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, Virginia

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Irving Younger makes a reasonably strong case for the individual guilt of Alger Hiss. By implication, he makes an even stronger case for the opening of the FBI files so that once and for all a number of disturbing questions can be answered. It would be unfortunate, however, if the continuing debate . . . were to confine its focus, as Mr. Younger's article does, to the narrow question of individual culpability. The Hiss case, as Alistair Cooke put it, did represent a "Generation on Trial." Although I am not part of that generation (I was eight when Chambers produced the pumpkin papers), the broader questions raised in the Hiss-Chambers trial have permeated our politics so thoroughly as to make my generation a participant at the bar.

Mr. Younger, in his legalistic fascination with the question of individual guilt, either slides over or ignores three problems of central significance. First is the nature of the charge itself. Hiss, as Mr. Younger acknowledges in a footnote, was never convicted of espionage: the statute of limitations had expired. He was convicted of perjury in a case which he himself had brought, but which was conducted in the context of a politically-charged investigation being concurrently conducted by the House Committee on Un-American Activities. The difference is not insignificant. There are good reasons for statutes of limitations. As Mr. Younger's article clearly shows, memories fade, and it is extraordinarily difficult accurately to reconstruct events of the distant past. Whether or not Hiss was guilty of perjury, it is clear that no jury, no court, ever could legitimately have convicted him of espionage—the crime with which he is generally associated in the public mind.

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This process of plea transference, of avoiding due process by altering the charge from one which could not be sustained (espionage) to one which could (perjury) while retaining the emotional charge of the former, set the stage for the whole bag of tricks now known as McCarthyism. . . .

But—and here I get to point two—there are reasons for suspecting that Hiss did not do all the nasty things of which he was accused. Chambers was a peculiar person, and a peculiar person might have the kind of peculiar memory for details and peculiar penchant for saving old papers that Chambers displayed. But a far more convincing explanation for Chambers's increasingly precise testimony is that he was being systematically fed new bits of evidence (some of it contrived) by a large, not-too-ethical, investigatory agency. Mr. Younger dismisses this possibility more through an act of faith than reason. Yet recent revelations should make us more skeptical of the procedural integrity of the FBI. Nixon's comments in the Watergate tapes—suggesting an active governmental role in producing the pumpkin papers—lend strong credence to the notion that some of the evidence was contrived. The FBI's reluctance to release its files on the case suggests, to my cynical mind at least, that the key to understanding the unsolved questions of the case is to be found in the role of the Bureau itself. Mr. Younger's argument that the Bureau would first have sought clearance from the President is patently absurd: a bureau chief strong enough to bypass his superior (the Attorney General) is strong enough to bypass all clearance, particularly if he has strong allies in Congress. Did J. Edgar Hoover receive Kennedy's clearance for the wiretapping of Martin Luther King?

None of this is meant particularly as a defense of Alger Hiss. The weaknesses in his testimony—as pointed up by Mr. Younger—suggest at a minimum that he was covering up for others. But the more enduring question has to do with the case and not the man, with the nature of the alleged offense rather than the perpetrator, with due process rather than guilt or innocence. In this light, the Hiss case must be deemed a significant turning point in the demise of civil liberty and in the rise of government lawlessness in the pursuit of political objectives. A generation is still on trial.

And this brings me to point three, which is Mr. Younger's studied attempt to divorce the trial from its political context. This is good law and sound doctrine for a lawyer, but it is bad history. I suspect that many of Hiss's defenders have been motivated by a desire to show that the American Left was loyal, that no espionage was taking place. Mr. Younger and others have shown that this defense will not work. Whether or not Hiss himself passed information to Chambers, there were people who did, people, moreover, whose access to sensitive documents was greater. Why then the obsessive concern with Hiss? To understand, one must recall Peter Viereck's brilliant essay on trans-tolerance. It is unfashionable, Viereck argued, to be prejudiced. If one wanted to destroy the American Left it had to be done under an egalitarian rubric. This meant that one's preferred enemies should not be black, Jewish, or foreign-born, but . . . Harvard Wasps. Hence a Perlo, Pressman, or Wadleigh would not do. Hiss was the perfect target for connecting international Communism with the Eastern Wasp intellectual establishment and for advancing the cause of the Nixon-McCarthy wing of the Republican party. Two fundamental points were thus joined in the Hiss case: the notion first that there was a significant internal Communist conspiracy which helped account for the rising power of the Soviet Union; and second that this conspiracy had penetrated to the heart of the "Eastern liberal establishment" which had let it happen. The Hiss case was, then, only inconsequentially the trial of an individual: it was at bottom the trial of a regime and its philosophy. It was the opening shot in what Telford Taylor later called the cold civil war.

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TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Irving Younger's skill as prosecutor almost wins a verdict of guilty from the COMMENTARY jury, judging by friends in New England and New York, all discussing "Was Alger Hiss Guilty?" wherever we visited this summer. But Mr. Younger's skill as defense counsel could establish doubt sufficient for exoneration in 1975 by developing what the original defense barely dared hint without the post-Watergate revelations about Hoover and the FBI. To quote Mr. Younger:

> Defense counsel's single thought as to who might have done it [forged the typewriter] was that Chambers knew "people who were skilled in doing the kind of thing the Communist party does." I don't think he meant Communists had framed Hiss, although Judge Goddard and Murphy took the remark to mean just that. I think he meant the federal government, and specifically the FBI, which surely is "skilled in doing the kind of thing the Communist party does." If I am correct, Hiss was claiming that the FBI had framed him.

As a witness against Hiss, Chambers appears first on September 3, 1939. Why, two days after the Hitler-Stalin pact, was Assistant Secretary of State Berle meeting with a recently employed *Time* book reviewer? Was Berle seeking information from a Communist informer? Or was Chambers an FBI agent routinely casting a wide net for possible evidence about employees who, like Hiss, were or had been in government agencies with known Communists and, one might add, whose New Deal views appeared Communist to J. Edgar Hoover and Henry Luce, if not to Chambers? It is remarkable that to this day no other Communist but Chambers ever seemed to have known Hiss as a party member.

What motivated Luce, an outspoken anti-Communist, to hire a man with a record of lying, stealing, nervous breakdown, Communist party affiliations, whose writing experience was limited to the *Daily Worker* and falsifying his name and information "on applications for a passport, government positions, and the like"? Was Luce providing Hoover, his Communist-hunting friend, with a cover for increasing the salary of an agent tracking Communists? . . .

After Chambers renounced the Communist party in 1929 "because of an intramural dispute," he may have turned informer for either ideological or financial reasons. But ex-membership has its limitations. Is that why in 1932, at the age of thirty-one, he rejoined the party? He left, apparently for the last time, at the end of December 1937,

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according to his 1945 deposition to a State Department security officer. . . . At the 1949 trial Chambers conveniently extended his party membership to April 1938 to encompass the 1938 evidence of Hiss's involvement with a Communist, namely Chambers, needed by the prosecution. Chambers also, on November 17, changed his negative response of November 5 to Hiss's attorney's question of "whether Chambers had ever obtained documents from Hiss for transmittal to the Communist party." It is strange that these two crucial discrepancies were not enough to throw the case out. . . .

But the crux of Mr. Younger's case is his conclusion that "Apart from the question of motive, there are two powerful reasons not to believe [that the typewriter was forged]." His first "powerful reason" is an unfounded assumption that "Hoover needed someone still higher to whom to pass the buck should the imposture come to light." For Hoover there was none higher than himself. . . . Presidents came and went but only death had power over Hoover.

Mr. Younger's second "powerful reason" is a *non sequitur* unworthy of a scholar but brilliant in a prosecutor: "An FBI bright enough to forge typewritten documents is bright enough to destroy the instrument of forgery as soon as it had done its work." . . . The papers may have been copied specially for the trial on a fabricated typewriter or on the original Woodstock which the Hisses had given their maid on Christmas 1936. Or Chambers might have obtained the Woodstock as well as the papers in the 30's when he was advancing up the ladder padding dossiers on people like Hiss. After Chambers left the cover of the Communist party, the FBI may have taken a while to stop the bureaucratic action that was bringing material from Hiss's wastepaper basket and retyping it on Mrs. Hiss's discarded Woodstock. Disposing of the typewriter at a time when no one contemplated using the material—after all, it contained no classified information—might have received minimal attention. . . .

Chambers's story and behavior make more sense viewed as those of an undercover agent than as a senior editor of *Time*. As one who has eviscerated the messy insides of many an October pumpkin, I've wondered about that "hollow" pumpkin out at the edge of Chambers's field, still on the vine apparently. Who had cleaned it out? When? A senior editor of *Time*? Or an FBI agent?

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TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Many people heard the evidence, and listened to the lawyers in the Hiss case, and some only read the records, as did Irving Younger. But by no means did they all agree that Hiss's conviction was justified.

Fred J. Cook, in *The Nightmare Decade*, confessed he had believed in Hiss's guilt until he read the history of the trial. Then he became convinced documents had been forged, and a typewriter doctored to give them the semblance of honesty. Reading the record, said Cook, had "raised some doubts." And that, Earl Jowitt said in his book, *The Strange Case of Alger Hiss*, is the one thing conviction of a man like Hiss is not supposed to do.

Does anyone believe trial evidence necessarily proves or disproves the guilt of a defendant? Too many people once proved guilty by "incontrovertible evidence" have later been proved innocent by better testimony to accept any such theory. Trial by jury may be the best device we have, but it is not infallible. If positive evidence of innocence is later found, it does violence to justice to say the original evidence is proof of guilt. . . .

To make it worse, Hiss was tried in an atmosphere of hysteria and sensation, by a press enthralled with the kind of news the trial afforded. "Evidence" was leaked to the press by both the FBI and the prosecution before the court heard it. It made big headlines.

During the "witch hunt" by Senator McCarthy and HUAC, which followed the case, thousands of people were unjustly accused of "Communism." There were very few who, like Hiss, had the courage to stand up and fight. It cost Hiss all his savings. HUAC, his adversary, was fortified by congressional appropriations. It had the assistance of the FBI and other government agencies. . . . Hiss's friends advised him to ignore the charges as others did who survived them. But by poetic justice, Hiss lived to see some of his principal tormentors censured and disgraced.

Twenty-five years have elapsed, nearly forty since the events which led to the conviction for perjury. Perhaps the truth is beginning to emerge. Some important evidence did in fact come to light immediately after the trial. In spite of every obstacle the FBI could put in his way, Hiss found some facts that certainly should have been considered. They were ruled out when the judge refused to sanction another trial. But if Hiss is innocent, and many who have studied the records think he is, his exoneration should come during his life, not after he is dead. . . .

To prove that Chambers had really received the papers from Hiss, the prosecution brought in testimony that the "documents" (they weren't really important papers—just run-of-the-mill State Department stuff that might have come out of some wastepaper basket) had been typed on a Woodstock typewriter like that which had belonged to the Hisses.

"Evidence doesn't come any clearer than that," says Mr. Younger. Well, if it doesn't, something is seriously wrong with our judicial system. But something was clearer than that. The jury overlooked two facts. One of the documents had been typed on a different machine, not a Woodstock. Even an FBI expert admitted this. Even more impressive, however, was the fact that some of the documents had to do with matters not accessible to Hiss, so he could not have typed them or given them to Chambers. Instead of simply raising a doubt, this evidence should have branded the rest as completely false. How could the jury have overlooked this?

Hiss, in his book written after the trial, says the papers were actually written on more than one typewriter, by more than one person, and with a number of different ribbons. In his book he showed that the machine the prosecution said he had owned had been altered to produce typing resembling his wife's personal correspondence. The solder by which the type bars were attached was of an entirely different composition from that used on original Woodstocks. Actually file marks showed where type had been changed to indicate wear. Thus the typing similarity had been deliberately faked. It was all a hoax. Yet this, Mr. Younger says, proved the verdict of guilty. . . .

At the time of the trial the government had just been through

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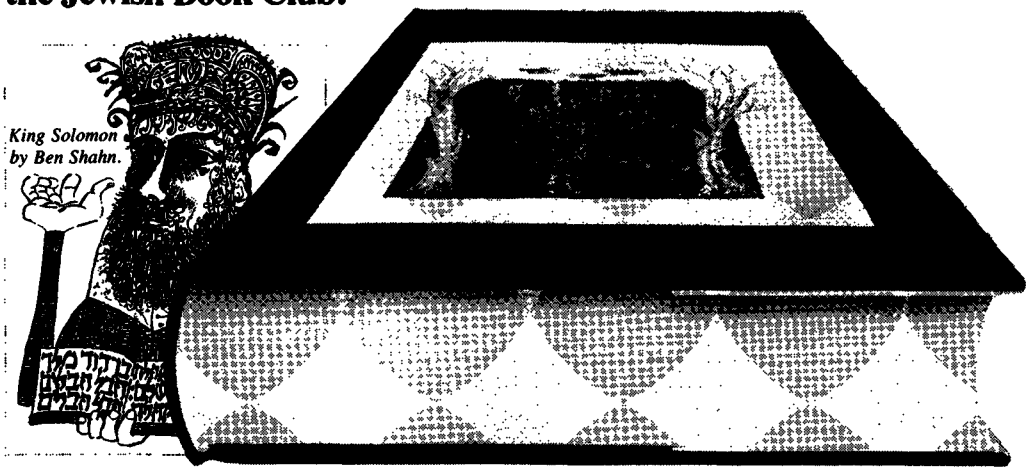

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a fanatical search for espionage. Two-and-a-half-million federal workers were run through the "loyalty mill." After hearings, all but 270 of the cases subsequently brought were dismissed and 69 of these were later reinstated. After three years of the most diligent search, not one single case of espionage had been discovered. The Hiss case was one of the few that ever got to trial, and the charge of espionage was changed to perjury, unquestionably to save the faces of those who accused him. It was evident that they were determined to "get" someone, by any means fair or foul. . . .

The kind of treatment Hiss received should not have been accorded any decent American citizen. It cost him his reputation, four years in prison, and ruin for the rest of his life. The tragedy is that it could have happened to anyone who had the courage to protest. It is as un-American as it could possibly be.

MARK TAYNTON
Taylors, South Carolina

IRVING YOUNGER writes:

Although my purpose in writing about the Hiss case was modest enough, I appear to have expressed it so obscurely that even Judge Stecher, a wise and perceptive reader, misunderstood. He says that I claim to have "discerned truth." Hardly.

All I tried to do was determine whether the evidence supported the jury's verdict. I came to the conclusion that it did, and I thought it important to explain why.

An unshakable faith in Hiss's innocence seems to characterize many of those who have commented on the article. Apart from repeating myself, I don't know what I can say to them. The only firm opinion with which I came to my study of the record was that Richard Nixon is grossly unfit for public office, a con man and a crook to whom lies, deceit, and the falsification of evidence come naturally. I would have preferred to find that Nixon's career began as it ended, with fraud and connivance. It would have delighted me to be able to demonstrate that Hiss had been Nixon's victim. The record led me to a different conclusion: that the evidence supported the verdict. Might Nixon and the FBI have contrived the evidence? Edward Schneier, for one, thinks that perhaps they did. There being no proof, I do not. Speculation that evidence was fabricated has persisted from the time of the trial to the present. It continues in many of the letters printed here. But despite the efforts of Hiss's lawyers and others committed to a belief in his innocence, speculation is what it remains. I know of no proof, and, until proof is offered, the jury's verdict stands.

In order to keep my analysis of the record to manageable length, I selected what in my judgment were the ten key issues and presented them as fairly as I could. I regret that David Levin is saddened "to learn that . . . a professor of law could not make a fairer and more accurate statement of Hiss's side of the case." Since we do come at the case from different sides, he from Hiss's and I from mine, it would be futile for me to respond in detail to all of Mr. Levin's contentions. I will choose just one, letting it stand for the rest.

Mr. Levin writes that "any professor of trial techniques ought at least to have mentioned [that] the prosecuting attorney never subpoenaed Hiss's rug. . . . Instead the prosecutor sneered at the defense for *its* failure to introduce the rug. . . ." I hope Mr. Levin will forgive me for instructing him on a point of law, but the truth of the matter is that the privilege against self-incrimination denies a prosecutor the right to subpoena evidence from a defendant. No one could have caused the rug to be produced in court except Alger Hiss, and he did not. This seems to persuade Mr. Levin that production of the rug would have shown Chambers's story to be false.

Mr. Levin is vexed because I wrote my article rather than his. That is an accusation the truth of which I am pleased to acknowledge.

Libertarianism

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his review of Robert Nozick's *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* [Books in Review, September] Josiah Lee Auspitz purports to find a fundamental inconsistency between, on the one hand, Nozick's expressed preference for invisible-hand explanations and his presentation of such an explanation for the (possible) appearance of a minimal state and, on the other hand, Nozick's historical theory of entitlement. Invisible-hand explanations are explanations of a realm which do not invoke the concepts used to describe that realm. According to the entitlement theory, a person justly possesses whatever he has come to possess by actions that do not themselves treat persons unjustly. Mr. Auspitz's thought is that, on the basis of the entitlement theory, the explanations that are given for individuals' entitlements are visible-hand explanations. Thus, these explanations violate Nozick's own preferences in explanation.

Before noting the central error in Mr. Auspitz's contention, it is worth noting two misleading points in his account of invisible-hand explanations. Mr. Auspitz suggests that to invoke an invisible-hand explanation is to banish from one's explanation any reference to "desires, wants, beliefs, and so on." Hardly. It is merely to refrain from giving the type of generally uninteresting explanation which occurs when we cite persons' desires and wants for, and beliefs about, just that phenomenon we intend to explain. Many *other* desires, wants, or beliefs may be cited in an invisible-hand explanation. Nor is it true, as Mr. Auspitz asserts, that according to Nozick, "all phenomena . . . can be satisfactorily understood in terms of an invisible-hand explanation." What Nozick does say is that having an invisible-hand explanation is more satisfying than having a visible-hand explanation.

Mr. Auspitz's main error, however, comes from his failure to distinguish between explanations for the existence of given phenomena and explanations in the sense of justifications or legitimations of existing phenomena. With respect to a given individual's possessions, there may be a story which *legitimates* his holdings by pointing to the unobjectionable character of the means employed in gaining those possessions, while there may be another story which explains his *having* those possessions by pointing to his past actions, or the reasons and causes of those actions. One hasn't violated one's announced preference for invisible-hand explanations for the existence of phenomena (such as a man's having certain possessions) when one explicates the legitimacy of some state of affairs by citing the legitimacy of the actions which generated it. The historical theory of entitlement is a program for

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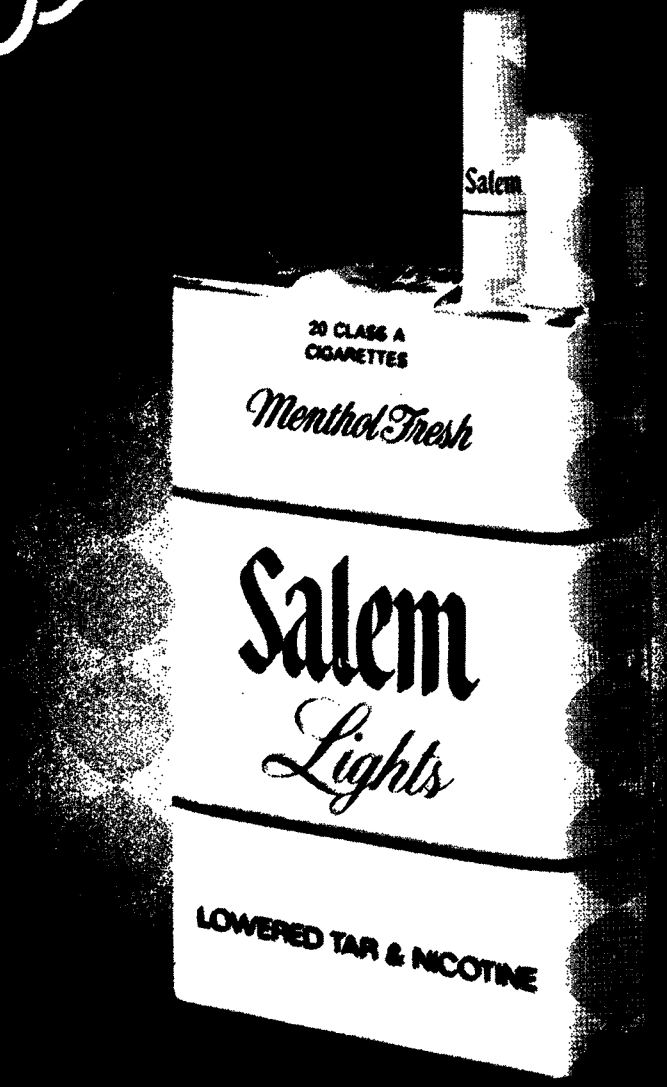

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legitimating holdings, not for accounting for their existence.

Finally, we should note another confusion which is witnessed in Mr. Auspitz's rhetorical question: "If the history of the acquisition and transfer of property is essential to understanding legitimate entitlements, why isn't the history of the state essential to understanding legitimate taxation and intervention?" Indeed, according to Nozick, in both cases the history of what obtains is crucial for determining whether what obtains is legitimate or illegitimate. Just as individual holdings are legitimate only if they come about without rights being violated, so too political institutions and practices are legitimate only if they come about and exist without rights being violated. Nozick's point, and one would have thought it to be his most obvious point, is that except if persons make the most extraordinary agreements (cf. Chapter 9) the appearance and existence of any more-than-minimal state will violate rights. That is why the more-than-minimal state is deemed illegitimate.

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TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I read with some dismay Josiah Lee Auspitz's comments on Robert Nozick's *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. Not only does Mr. Auspitz fail to outline accurately the book's main claims; he goes further and bases a sweeping criticism of analytic political philosophy on his apparent misunderstanding of Nozick.

I share Mr. Auspitz's fondness for a "more than minimal state" in which political liberties also play a central role. Yet I believe Nozick may have exposed a deep malaise in the intellectual foundations of this "liberalism." Roughly, Nozick claims to show that an unequivocal commitment to promote *only* social institutions that do not violate "natural individual rights" is compatible with promoting a "minimal nightwatchman state," but incompatible with promoting a state with more extensive functions. A "liberal" may respond either by giving up his liberalism as incoherent or by finding an intellectual rationale for political liberties independent of "natural individual rights."

Mr. Auspitz errs in saying ". . . Nozick argues . . . that the modern state with its claim to monopolize the legitimate use of force is a moral necessity." Nozick *does* argue that the minimal nightwatchman state is a moral *possibility*. More precisely, he argues that such a state *could* develop without violating anyone's natural individual rights. He does *not* argue that any state ever has, in fact, developed in this way, nor that a dominant "Wackenhut enterprise" ever behaved differently from the Mafia. His point is that the dominant protective association could refrain from violating individual rights without becoming economically unviable. In arguing this Nozick is simply attempting to demonstrate that the concept of a minimal state violating no one's natural individual rights is a coherent political ideal—free from internal contradictions. He is admittedly mute on the question of how that ideal is to be realized—how to corral runaway protective associations without violating anybody's rights. But political philosophers, beginning with Plato, have always been a bit weak on "implementation."

Mr. Auspitz claims to find "rival doctrine[s] of explanation" underlying Nozick's argument that the minimal state need not violate anyone's rights and his exposition of the "entitlement theory" of distributive justice. This claim appears to rest on a rather simple equivocation about "historical." Nozick's argument about the minimal state *is not* historical because it does not refer to any state that actually existed. His "entitlement theory" *is* historical because it tells us we must look at some things that happened in the past in order to judge whether present distributions are just. But these facts do not betray any lurking incompatibility. Whatever faults the "entitlement theory" may have, it is a straightforward attempt to make explicit the role the minimal state may assume in matters of economic justice. Its main role in the book is to demonstrate that state implementation of stronger theories of distributive justice, like that of John Rawls, will always violate somebody's individual rights.

I do not vouch for the validity of Nozick's arguments, much less their soundness. His arguments are intricate and often elliptical. The central concept of "natural individual right" is rather vaguely defined. But these deficiencies hardly indicate ". . . some deep deficiency in the habits of rigorous logical analysis in dealing with issues of moral and political philosophy." At most they show that Nozick might not have been as careful as he should have been in applying these methods. It should also be noted that Mr. Auspitz's remarks about the limits of *formal* logical analysis, even were they accurate (which, unfortunately, they are not), would not be relevant to explaining the putative deficiencies of Nozick's book. Nozick makes no use of formal logical analysis—a fact about the book of possible interest to prospective readers—though the review misleadingly suggests otherwise.

Nozick's "methodology" is nothing more than elaborating some rather traditional talk about "natural rights" by taking it literally and trying to make it precise using plain, everyday English plus some rudimentary concepts from microeconomics known to most who have endured a modern college course in economics. The point of philosophical analysis in the moral and political arena, as in other areas, is not to force our thinking into some rigorous formal mold. It is rather to assist us in being as clear as we can about the implications of our moral and political commitments. Nozick, in attempting to lay out precisely a rather extreme version of libertarianism, has produced a vision of "the good society" which many of us will not share. But those who do not share it owe him an equally sharp formulation of their alternative.

JOSEPH D. SNEED
Heidelberg University
Heidelberg, Germany

JOSIAH LEE AUSPITZ writes:

Before dealing with the larger issues raised by these two letters, I should like to say, first, that Eric Mack is certainly right that I should have written "satisfyingly" instead of "satisfactorily" in my attempt to précis Nozick. Also, for purposes of clarification, I would like to add that Nozick's essay on coercion is most widely available in the anthology, *Philosophy, Politics, and Society* (fourth series, Peter Laslett, W. G. Runciman, and Quentin Skinner, editors, Barnes & Noble, 1972), and that in my review I called his attempt to derive a coercion-free view of law "eccentric" in terms of the view of "deterrence" contained in that essay.

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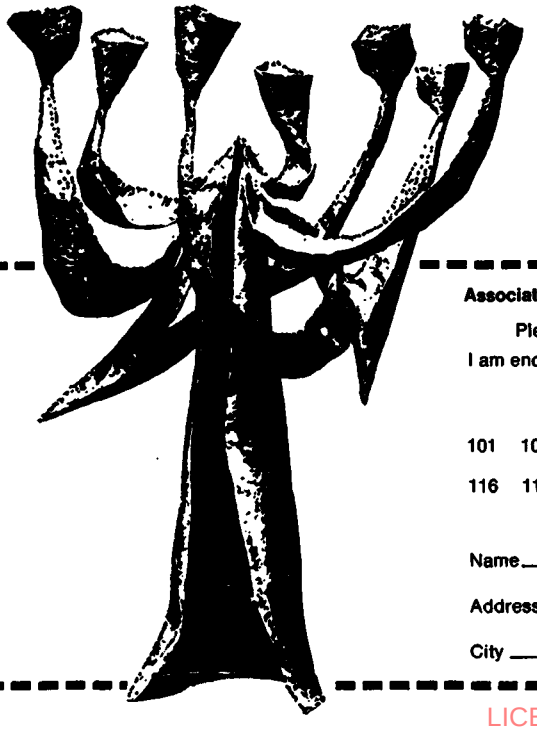

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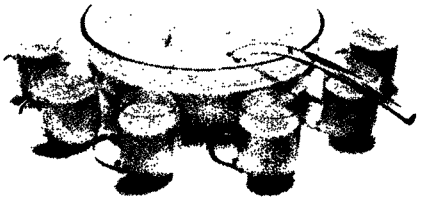

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That said, I must respectfully decline to accept the other proposed additions and corrections of my correspondents. Mr. Mack does not accurately render my sentences on invisible-hand devices by suggesting that I see them as always inanimate, since my first introduction of the term makes clear that I don't, and he errs much more seriously in rendering the first of my two "rhetorical questions" as less than a recognition of the very point to which he has devoted his letter. My theme here, as the two sentences which follow the one he quotes make clear, is not that the questions raised by Nozick's methodological discrepancies are in principle irreconcilable (I, in fact, studiously avoided referring to them as "inconsistencies") but that "since Nozick proposes no adequate answer to these questions, we cannot accept his book as a coherent, enduring, or even plausible contribution to political theory."

Mr. Mack's own carefully phrased letter attempts without success to provide the reconciliation that Nozick neglects. Mr. Mack's restatement is at least true to Nozick's own unfortunate usage of "legitimacy" as meaningful in the absence of man-made law, as well as to Nozick's confusion of "historical" principles with legal reasoning. Mr. Mack's antepenultimate sentence, for example, accurately reflects Nozick's own difficulty in finding philosophical form for the perception that political practices and institutions may have come about in the past by force and fraud (that is, they can be historically "illegitimate") and yet may operate legitimately in the present without rights being violated.

But despite this faithfulness to the spirit of the book, Mr. Mack errs in thinking that the distinction between Nozick's two discursive sections is that between scientific explanation and moral justification, for Part I mixes both kinds of enterprise. Rather, the disparity between the two parts stems from the fact that Part I is shaped by the requirements of an implicit attack on Murray Rothbard, while much of Part II is directed explicitly against John Rawls. Since Rothbard's praxeology makes much of Talcott Parsons's pattern-variable scheme, Nozick shifts ground on him by resuscitating *homo economicus,* constructing an invisible-hand model, and then using it to justify his view that the only legit-

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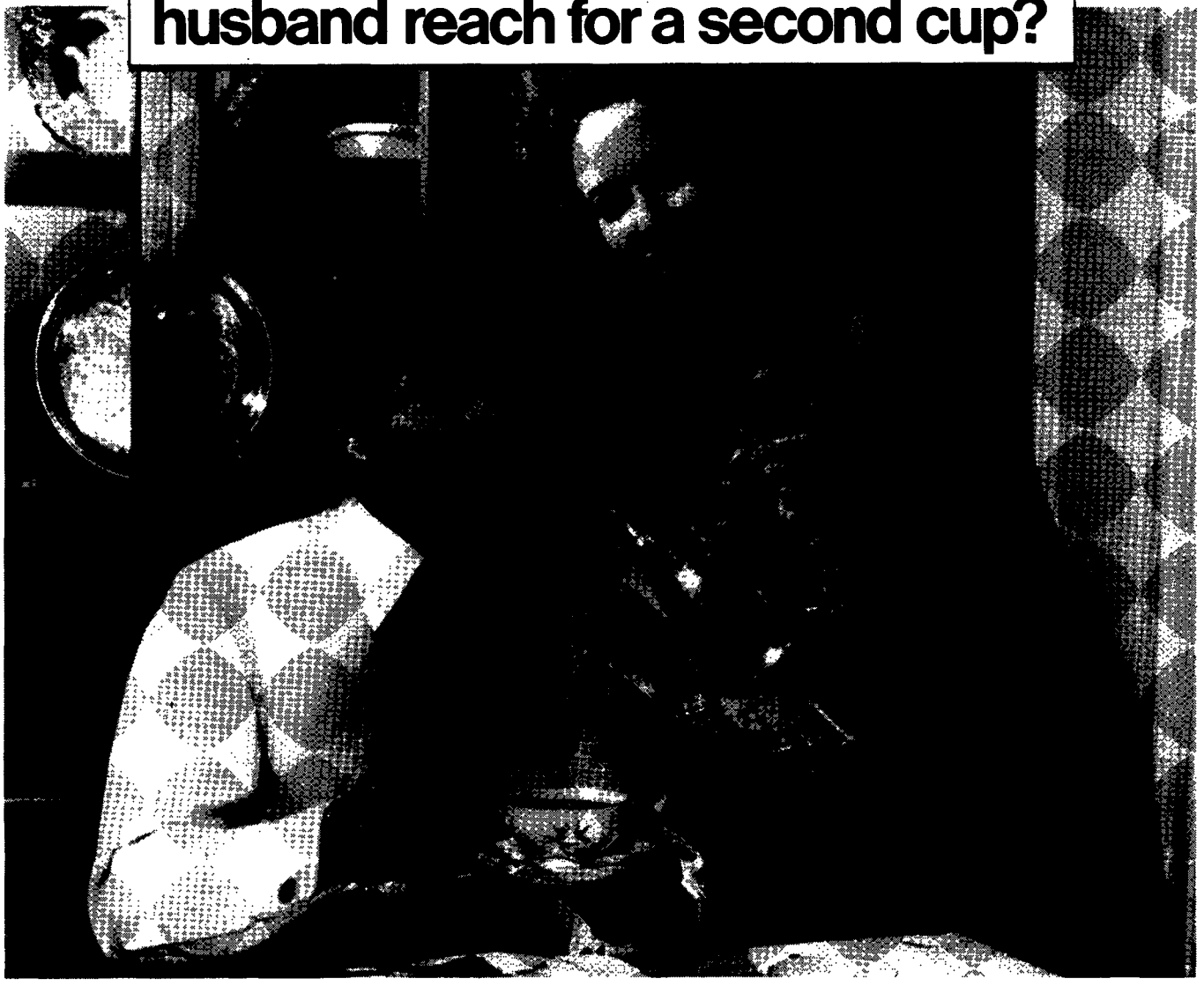

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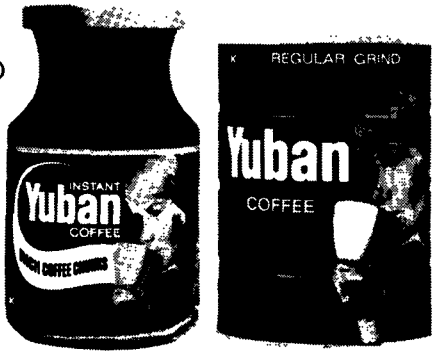

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imate state is a benign policing-services corporation. Since John Rawls's replacement schema in ethics draws support from structural approaches, like that of Noam Chomsky in linguistics, Nozick counters this with an argument against all "structural" and "patterned" accounts.

Nozick concludes with an interesting but undeveloped suggestion (pages 278-79) of a position of radical methodological pluralism. It is this suggestion to which Mr. Mack might have more plausibly turned in his attempt to vindicate Nozick. But perhaps he found, as I did, that even if one were to construct such a pluralistic position and assume it to have been demonstrated with the care evident in, say, Nozick's article on "Moral Structures" (*Natural Law Forum*, 1968) one would still be left with the question of why from his bag of non-complementary methods Nozick chooses to be reductionist and structural only about what he doesn't like (the state) and misty-eyed and historical about what he does (private property).

Hence my second "rhetorical question," which Mr. Mack chose not to quote, is indeed rhetorical in the strict Aristotelian sense of trying to evoke more than one has time to argue: "And if . . . we must use a reductionist method to lay bare the fundamental *structure* of the state, why not use a *similar* method to view justice within the state?" (emphasis added).

The more general problem at issue here is the relation of the several modes of argumentation in a philosophy of politics. Since politics is an arena in which all activities compete, the presence of diverse analogies and authorities is unavoidable. The result is that the philosopher who addresses himself to politics works under a more difficult burden than one who labors in less tangled vineyards. He must devote extraordinary effort simply to clearing a path. Much as the politician must be able to take the measure of many different kinds of people to accomplish his ends, the philosopher of politics must assess the weight of many kinds of argumentation before he will be able to speak in a clear voice.

Yet unlike politics, philosophy is an activity at which one cannot succeed without being able to articulate an understanding of what one is doing. In political philosophy this means more than the usual attention to putting into coherent relation the methods one has seen fit to employ. It is not any given methods per se that are objectionable, but one's failure to use them self-critically.

Joseph D. Sneed's letter revolves around three more technical issues: the distinction between consistency and coherence, the relation in a natural-law philosophy between natural and civil law, and the role of analytic technique in a philosophy of politics. He would perhaps have given a better account of himself on these issues had he preserved a greater philosophical calm in the face of what he misconstrued as an ideologically motivated hatchet job and a "sweeping criticism of analytic political philosophy."

In his dismay over this doubly odious attack, he seems to have missed entirely, among others, the point that was emphasized in my title: namely, that a "libertarianism without law" is *ipso facto* incoherent, however internally consistent a given part of its exposition may be. Thus, Mr. Sneed writes that to "corral runaway protective associations without violating anybody's rights" is one of those problems of "implementation" that philosophers since Plato have commonly left to others. Surely, he must know better. Corraling state power, however one defines the state, requires having some initial conception of law as a conscious and man-made phenomenon. Philosophers, Plato not the least among them, have given considerable attention to this problem, even when they have seen civil law as a reflection of natural law, divine law, or organic social need.

Nozick evades the problem of conscious civil law by positing an invisible-hand mechanism to limit "legitimate" law to, as I see it, "what would come into being in any case as the unintended consequence of non-coercive acts." To generate a state from these acts he is forced to make the improbable assumption that a policing-services corporation would feel constrained not to violate the natural rights which its customers, as moral persons, must respect in each other (a kind of assumption, incidentally, which Nozick explicitly criticizes when discussing attempts to attribute moral obligations to "society").

If we accept this postulate, Nozick's hypothetical construction of the minimal state is, as I observed and as Mr. Sneed repeats,

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internally consistent. That is, the claim of the state to monopolize the use of force is exactly what I called it: a "moral necessity," a condition which follows necessarily from the moral axioms of natural law as they apply to individuals and Wackenhut agencies. Nozick, in fact, in the very first sentence of his exposition poses the question of necessity as the central one: "If the state did not exist, would it be necessary to invent it?"

Of course, from another point of view, the entire invisible-hand construct is only a defective hypothesis, so that Mr. Sneed is not incorrect in calling it only a "moral possibility," just as I was not incorrect in suggesting that, even on hypothetical grounds, it is a very plausible possibility. Nozick himself, however, thinks it provides a strong enough presumption to answer his question in the affirmative and to prove that a policing monopolist could consolidate state-like power without a single coercive act.

I go back over this material because there is an important technical point embedded in Nozick's generation of the state which Mr. Sneed might have seen had he reflected less on the ideological and more on the philosophical implications of the prominent use made of John Locke throughout my review. Let me now draw the point out in the more cumbersome technical language I earlier tried to avoid.

If the possible minimal (or ultra-minimal) state follows necessarily and exclusively from a logic of unintended consequences, there is no nexus in it between abstract natural right and conscious, concrete civil law. The state which is shown not to violate postulated natural rights comes into being by a process which precludes agreement on a system of civil law alone or on a procedure for adjudicating disputes over the interpretation of these rights. This is the philosophical import of Nozick's rejection of Locke's social compact, as well as of his assertion that the state of nature continues to exist within the minimal state. It is a sufficiently striking departure from the tradition with which Nozick identifies that it must either be celebrated and debated as a bold innovation in natural-law theory (to be set beside contractarian, divine-right, and general-will theories) or rejected out of hand as a solecism.

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the general prospects for invisible-hand/natural-law theories in providing a reasoned account of the state, Nozick's current attempt must be judged a failure on the evidence of his own entitlement principles. Though he calls these principles "historical," they are patently principles of legal reasoning about the use to be made of the past in interpreting precedents and assigning guilt. As legal principles, they are meaningless without the possible existence of a consciously developed legal system and an agreed adjudicative procedure. The invisible-hand state generated in Part I of Nozick's book, however, precludes conscious agreement. It is thus incompatible with giving juridical content to the entitlement principles of Part II.

Anarchy, State, and Utopia is not, then, what Mr. Sneed calls "a rather extreme version of libertarianism" well presented, but a defective version, stemming from a systematic incapacity to deal with adjudication. Nozick has disguised this painful defect from himself and many of his professional colleagues by employing a bifurcated exposition, an unexamined methodological pluralism, and a dazzling array of technical devices.

I noted in my review a circumstance which might incline us to hope for better from Nozick in the future: the roots of his error lie not in simple obtuseness but in an attempt to extrapolate into politics the precise view of "deterrence" contained in his journal article on "Coercion." What was a provocative remark in a piece of minute analysis turns out to be the source of an egregious error in a more ambitious project. There is a lesson here for others, and my criticisms of the misapplication of analytic technique to politics drew this out in a more pointed and less sweeping and ignorant way than Mr. Sneed suggests.

In entering into philosophical discussion of justice and the state, analytic philosophers are committing themselves to a more urbane and speculative tradition of discourse than that to which they have been accustomed. It, too, has high standards, to which their formal logical training does not guarantee them access. I must heartily reaffirm, then, the remark that Mr. Sneed accurately quotes that the formative habits of analytic philosophers contain a "deep deficiency" that may in fact incapacitate them for larger philosophic enterprise.

For example, in minute analysis, consistency is properly a decisive criterion, while in a larger enterprise coherence is a more appropriate standard. One may overlook trivial verbal contradictions if a philosophy of the state or of justice hangs together. Mr. Sneed's use of coherence as synonomous with the absence of contradiction (and Mr. Mack's similar difficulty in distinguishing them) suggest that the deficiencies are neither less deep, less widespread, nor less crippling than I maintained.

Correction

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

There is a misprint in a line of my poetry quoted by John Romano in his article "The New Laureates" [October]. The line should be "And we give/Fullness to the dream." In the article, "dread" was substituted for "dream." The title of the poem (not given in the article) is "*Le Livre est sur la Table.*"

JOHN ASHBERY
New York City

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Anti-Americanism at Home and Abroad

Henry Fairlie

IF THERE used to be nothing more ludicrous than the English people in one of its periodic fits of morality, as Macaulay put it, these have been replaced in this century by the spectacle of the American people—at least a vocal section of it—in one of its periodic fits of self-mortification. If not ludicrous, at any rate, they are vacant; they seem to have no intention; when they are over, they leave no issue. As Philip Guedalla, then one of the liveliest British commenators on the contemporary scene, wrote in 1933: "The fierce alacrity with which American citizens denounce their institutions without the slightest effort to improve them is a perennial surprise." More than intermittently it is also a bore.

I am not speaking of the steady criticism that any nation—and in particular its intellectuals—ought to maintain of its own society, but of a virulence of tone—a kind of bile—which seems to spring from self-doubt into self-hate. In the late 1960's, a British journalist, Ferdinand Mount, who was visiting the United States, said: "You can't stop people hating themselves if that is their preferred choice. . . . [But] even the strain of the Vietnam war does not explain why, for the first time, this cyclically recurrent self-doubt should have weakened the universality of belief in the American ideal." Well, he was wrong in one respect, of course: it was not the first time that the *universality* of this belief had been eroded. But it is true that, during the late 1960's and to some extent since then, whatever the provocations, the repulsion of many Americans from their own country and its total experience has been not merely virulent, not only monotonous, but itself a kind of sickness, which in turn needs diagnosis.

The capacity of Americans for self-criticism has often been noted by outsiders. "Nowhere else is national self-criticism practiced with a severity so relentless and a mockery so bitter," wrote L. P. Jacks in 1933. "Thoughtful people are to be met with all over the country whose minds seems to be constantly exercised in the diagnosis of the national disease." Cyril Connolly said twenty years later: "At a time when the American way, backed by American resources, has made the country into the greatest power the world has known, there has never been more doubting and questioning of the purpose of the American process; the higher up one goes the more searching becomes the self-criticism, the deeper the thirst for a valid mystique of humanity." Twenty years later still, in *Love-Hate Relations,* Stephen Spender has talked of "that passionate hatred of their own country which sometimes affects the most cultivated (and perhaps deeply patriotic) Americans." And the quotations could be multiplied.

What does it all signify? I was about to say that there have been times when French writers have been as uniformly and virulently critical of France as American writers of their own country, but as one begins to write the sentence, one checks it. Because there is no way in which the French can in this manner be critical of *France.* France is too old, it has already been too many things, its defeats have been as numerous as its victories, its culture has been too varied and its society too local, too many harvests (as Marc Bloch put it) have been lifted from its soil, for a French writer to be anti-French in the way in which an American writer is able to be anti-American. The bitterness of French intellectual life during the Algerian war (when for a time I was reporting from both France and Algeria) was not anti-*France* in the same way in which American intellectual life was so bitterly anti-*America*—as if indeed it was *Amerika*—during the Vietnam war.

But to the American, his country is so self-contained in space and in time that he can think of it—it sometimes seems, only think of it—as one. There it is, bounded by its oceans, separated from Europe and Asia and Africa, all of which are joined: from what was conceived to be the *Orbis Terrarum* of the Old World. Its birthday is known —when it was conceived, when it was born—as no great country of Europe has a birthday; in fact, it is the only great country in the world that has a birth certificate. Everything that has happened to it, that now happens, that yet will happen, can therefore be understood as happening in this *unit* of space, this *unit* of time. Everything can be shown to have led from there to here, from then

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to now, so that the whole historical experience of the country can be indiscriminately condemned. If there is sin, it is original sin; if a cause, an original cause; and so it can be argued, as it in fact has been argued, that from Salem the road led directly and inevitably to Saigon.

The criticism of his own country by the American can therefore take two forms that are not so available, and in most cases not available at all, to others. He can express his bitterness that the performance of America has not fulfilled its promise—that it has not done what it was created to do, or become what it was bidden to be—or, if that still leaves the possibility of too much hope, he can reach back from some present evil and say that there, in the beginning, was the precursor of this sinfulness: we persecuted witches, we killed Indians, we raped the land, we enslaved Negroes, we shot Wobblies, we assassinated Presidents, *and so*—this the lever for the virulence—we bombed peasants, and there is no health in us.

Of course, there is no "*and so*"; history is not like that, not even American history. As far as I know—and I am ready to trust my knowledge on this—no one in France thought of tracing the savageries of the Algerian war to Joan of Arc or the Massacre of St. Bartholomew; and no one in Britain imagined that the Suez adventure was the result of a ferocious streak in the British character which has been there since Queen Boadicea attached knives to the wheels of her chariots to cut the Roman legionaries off at the knees, which after all was not exactly cricket. But to the American anti-American—who makes the historical country itself the target of his complaints—this confusion of past and present is necessary. The anti-American lives outside his country's present, in a myth of its past; and from this myth, he condemns what ought to be the numerous possibilities of its future to be those only of repetition, a curse that is never to be lifted.

This is not criticism of one's society, in fact it prohibits just and effective criticism; it is a tremor in the mind of the country, which is never stilled and at times of difficulty can send a shock through the whole land. One reason why it can have this effect is that anti-Americanism in America (and this is to some extent, as we will see, true also of it abroad) is in some of its aspects a reflection of Americanism. It is as agitated by the symbols and myths and metaphors of the "American experience" as others, the Lions or the DAR or the Kiwanis, are consoled by them. Both seem tempted to reduce the whole of American history to a metaphor that will comprehend *it all*, then personally to be experienced—one might even say appropriated—by them; its story, their story.

EVERY American in each generation, it appears, must regard himself as responsible for all that his society has done, does, and will do; and in this manner the anti-American in America is able to argue that because America—i.e., he—enslaved the Negroes, it was inevitable that he—i.e., America—shot Martin Luther King. In fact, American history seems often to be conceived as a kind of psychiatric case history, doomed to be repeated in every American in each generation; as if the United States must continually pass through Erik Erikson's "Eight Stages of Man," constantly being returned to the first stage, "Basic Trust vs. Basic Mistrust," from there to repeat its journey.

No American alive today enslaved the Negroes, or was a slaveholder, just as no Englishman alive today carried on the slave trade with all the lust and greed that made Britain in its time the greatest slaving nation in the world. Yet, whereas no Englishman today feels any guilt or other responsibility for the deeds of his ancestors, the American is apparently expected to go on—and on—crying *mea culpa* for every misdeed that has been performed in his land since Christopher Newport turned his three ships into the James River almost four hundred years ago. One must be cautious of the Marxist assertion that one cannot blame the slaveholder because he was acting only as a slaveholder must in a slaveholding society. Its traps may be seen most recently in E. H. Carr's notorious work, *What Is History?*, in which his serious polemical purpose seems to be to exonerate each and every Bolshevik who performed any atrocity. Nevertheless, the Marxist correction is needed in America if its historical society is to be perceived as existing and developing in historical time.

To take another example, a favorite one with the anti-American: it simply is not true that America is a more violent society than others. William R. Brock, one of the best of British scholars in American studies—they are rare birds, but there are such people—has written, with the past decade in mind:

> It is frequently said that the American people are a violent people, and this is stated as though it explains much. . . . A candid examination may throw doubt on these beliefs and it is doubtful whether the American character is specially prone to violence; indeed the long record of peaceful settlement and growth, together with an almost superstitious reverence for the law and constitutions, might suggest the opposite. It is true that Americans have often been singularly negligent in their provisions for law enforcement; but this is to say that government failed, not that people were abnormally addicted to violence. . . . The American tradition of violence is thus a convention rather than a historical truth.

I do not understand how any serious person could want to change even an inflection in those careful words. Yet the fact is that Rap Brown had only to say, "Violence is necessary and it's as American as cherry pie," for the myth to be given an almost sacral significance, which at times has

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seemed to constitute the whole of the scripture of the Op-Ed page of the New York *Times*.

It is worth going back a few years to the introduction which that great but still perverse historian, Richard Hofstadter, wrote in 1970 to a "documentary history" of *American Violence*. Again and again, he faces the fact that violence in America has not, in comparison with other societies, past and present, been exceptional; again and again, he must reach to some argument to prove that nevertheless it has been phenomenal. His almost opening words reveal his difficulty: "The United States, it has been said, has a history but not a tradition of domestic violence." What do the words "a history" mean in that sentence? Nothing that merits them. There have just been a collection of violent deeds which have no historical connection. The "documents" in the "documentary history" should not have been gathered into one volume; they have no thematic relevance to each other.

But there's the rub. Theme. . . . Theme. . . . Theme. American history must be shown to have a theme, for better (Americanism) or for worse (anti-Americanism). That there was once slaveholding in some of the states *means* that the white can never deal justly with the black; that Bacon rebelled in 1676 *means* that someone must raise a gun to a President in 1976; that someone cut down a few trees to build a log cabin in Jamestown *means* that Americans are doomed always to rape their landscape. At its most strenuous but also its most irritating, this feeling of personal guilt for the historical past, even for historical accident, is to be found in the poetry of Robert Lowell, from *For the Union Dead* right through to *Notebooks*, the series of poems he wrote during 1967-68. He must be confessional even about his ancestors, his country's past; and the fact that he often reaches, for his symbols, beyond the American experience to Europe only compounds the sense of imprisonment in a theme. "I sat in the sunset / shade of their Bastille, the Pentagon, / nursing leg- and arch-cramps"—one almost has the violent feeling in response that it was his mind that had the cramps. The very fact that he had to spell out the symbol, "Bastille=Pentagon," demonstrates its weakness, and one may add that the analogy is a frivolous diminishment of the symbolic significance of the Bastille in European history.

There is something very tiring in so often being asked to think of a rather ordinary demonstration in front of the Department of Defense in terms of Robert Lowell's strained feet or Norman Mailer's strained digestion. Yet this is very American, and therefore it is very anti-American. One is always *there* in America, usually in both roles: always Indian and Cowboy, in a way in which one is not Saxon and Norman in England, or Cavalier and Roundhead. One is always role-playing, always mythical, always the Whale, or Ahab, or Ishmael, or Melville, or even the Sea itself. One remembers Mary McCarthy's request some years ago that literature should return from the pole of myth to the pole of journalism; yet in her own journalism—on Vietnam, for example—she resorts to myth. She is often very journalistic in her fiction; in her journalism she gets on the back of that Whale.

Another British scholar in American studies, Marcus Cunliffe, has put it well, not an original point, but a point stated with an unnervous simplicity:

> For some observers the American Dream has been the American Nightmare. In either case it has supplied an extraordinary drama (or melodrama) peopled with scouts and trappers, Yankees and Cavaliers, cowboys and Indians, sheriffs and badmen, Huck Finns and Nigger Jims, Abe Lincolns and Huey Longs, preachers and robber barons, do-gooders and con-men, Al Capones and J. Edgar Hoovers, hobos and work-bosses, loners and Babbitts. No other nation has produced so rich a cast of symbolic characters for modern times. There are South American epics in prose and poetry celebrating the heroic gaucho. For all I know they are finer than anything written about the United States. But they have not made a mark on the world's imagination. Perhaps Canadian history is full of stories waiting to be told. But I suspect they would require too many footnotes to get much beyond the walls of academe. The Mounties are picturesque, yet too trim and decent to linger in one's fantasies. Territorially, Canada and Brazil are as big as the United States, but their historical folklore has been far smaller.

He is absolutely right; and the adversary characters that he lists are again a reflection of the persistent intertwining of Americanism with anti-Americanism. Yet it is the fact that they are mythical—characters in "drama" or "melodrama"—and not (even when they are actual persons) historical or journalistic, that is at the core of it all.

But let us look overseas, using the British example as an instruction, not merely because it is the one with which I am most familiar, but because the very closeness of the English connection with American history tells its own fruitful tale.

The most expected ingredient in anti-Americanism abroad has been a response of the older nations to their declining power, and the passing of that power, in the case of the British, to their "daughter," to their "son," or to "Jonathan," as they used rather disdainfully to call the United States in the 19th century. "The dislike of America which has grown up in England," wrote Bertrand Russell in 1927, "is due to the fact that world empire has now passed from Lombard Street to Wall Street. The British navy, it is true, is still nominally ours, but we dare not employ it in any way displeasing to Washingon." Some twenty years later, in 1949, Isaiah Berlin said that "British

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irritation with America . . . goes beyond the norm to be expected of a people so naturally reluctant to recognize a shift in world balance as we obviously are." And he added: "It is an irritation which arises partly from a lack of historical imagination, which is a faculty born of the buffetings of fortune, from which this island has long been mercifully preserved."

More recently, Donald Davie, a British literary critic, has translated these political comments into a cultural comment: "It is now British culture which is haunted by the fear that it is only a colonial culture, a dependency of the U.S. . . . As we find them in British intellectual life, pro-Americanism and anti-Americanism are alike symptoms of sickness, of a failure of nerve, a loss of conviction in ourselves and our past." But the British case, precisely because of the exceptional character of the relationship between the two countries, itself largely the result of their common language, can be instructive of more than itself. The "Love-Hate Relations" in the title of Stephen Spender's book are of considerable subtlety, and they extend beyond English and American literature.*

It is important, if one is to understand the meaning of American power, to understand the meaning for other nations of the decline of their own power. The first outburst of anti-Americanism in Britain after the cooperation during World War II occurred between the end of that war and the fiasco of the British adventure at Suez. The decline of British power and influence was being sharply felt even before the steepness of that decline was finally revealed in the Middle East. It was not only irksome to find that Britain was increasingly unable to rule its empire effectively; it was even more irksome to find that the United States had increasingly the power and especially the influence to make the continuation of that rule even more difficult.

The first and most long-lasting of all the occasions for such irritation and even bitterness had, of course, been Britain's handling of the Irish question. The English historian, J. A. Froude, although himself a critic of English rule in Ireland, felt it his duty to go to the United States in 1872 and try to counter the propaganda there of the Irish nationalists. At that time, the Irish Americans were to the English the same bogey as were the American Jews, later on, during Britain's "troubles" in Palestine; and with a high sense of responsibility, which nothing ever diminished in him, Froude set out solemnly on his mission. "I go like an Arab of the desert," he wrote in a letter before his departure; "my hand will be against everyone, and therefore everyman's hand will be against me . . . my hope will be, like St. Paul's, to fling some word or words among them which will set them by the ears among themselves." After he had given some of his lectures, he wrote home: "The Irish are furious. . . . The American Irish are mad." He believed that his life was in danger.

As late as 1937, Rudyard Kipling wrote of his years in America at the end of the 19th century: "When the [American] people looked, which was seldom, outside their own borders, England was still the dark and dreadful enemy to be feared and guarded against. The Irish, whose creed is Hate; the history books in schools; the Orators; the eminent Senators; and above all, the Press; saw to that." There was an echo of this in the fierceness and virtual unanimity of the British reaction a few years ago when Edward Kennedy criticized the English handling of the Irish question today, even though the British at the time were free with their criticisms, not only of American intervention in Vietnam, but also of America's handling of its own racial problems.

A few years later, the Irish question was replaced by the Indian question. India was becoming difficult to rule, the Americans made it no easier, and again the English traveler to America tried gamely to keep his end up. Harold Nicolson in 1930 at last lost his patience in Dayton, Ohio, when a woman in the audience asked the inevitable question about the "fate of the poor Indians," to which up till then he had given a moderate and civil reply, but this time answered: "Which Indians?—yours or ours? You must realize that the two problems are distinct. For whereas we educated and multiplied our Indians, you practically exterminated yours. It would be very difficult for us at this date to adopt the solution which has proved so successful in your country and to confine the aborigines of India to reserves." And this voice was to remain the same as the Indian question was replaced by the Palestine question, the Palestine question by the Suez question, and the Suez question by the question of the African colonies.

* For all its many insights, I think that Spender's analysis of "English and American sensibilities" in the end fails, and one of the reasons is an error that he would not have committed in the 1930's or even the 1940's: he contrasts the literatures of the two countries in isolation from any political or social context. Literature, art, culture, are granted an autonomy which they do not possess, although they now claim it, and our age allows it to them. (The symbol of this in America, of course, is the Hamptons in summer, where it is never very clear whether the art critic created the artists, or the artist created his own work. That art should live in some sort of community with the whole society is disdained.) I have forgotten who it was, but someone once protested against the fact that we are today more inclined to take our picture of, say, Dublin in 1916 from a novel by James Joyce than from the newspaper accounts of the time, or the reports of the lieutenant-governor of the day, or the journal of the Archbishop of Dublin, or the actual memories of one of the "rebels." We automatically believe the literary account more than the factual accounts; and there is something very misleading in seeing, so to speak, two literatures, English and American, carrying on their own debate, with little or no reference to the actual conditions of their societies, but solely as a kind of contest between various myths of those societies, which it is then easy to "polarize."

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ALWAYS the Americans lectured the British, and it is hardly surprising that, in the past quarter of a century, some Englishmen and, perhaps even more, some Frenchmen have enjoyed the fact that the roles have been reversed: that it is now America that must act, and Britain and Europe that can criticize. Even sympathy for the Americans can take the patronizing form of saying that it is now their turn to take it on the chin. During the period of its supremacy, says Harold Macmillan, "Britain was hated, reviled, and intrigued against in all the chancelleries of Europe and outside. Now the torch has passed largely into American hands. Now they in turn are reapers of the same harvest. That is the 'price of admiralty.'" Moreover, there is a counterpoint to this, evident since the collapse of the American position in Vietnam: the persistent doubt whether the United States will be willing to bear that price in the defense of Europe; in particular, the constant reproach of the English against the Americans, that they will not now manfully bear the odium that once attached to "perfidious Albion," as it kept the peace of the world in the *Pax Britannica*.

All of this may seem obvious. But there is a coda to it that makes the question more interesting. Froude had doubts whether America would prove to be the hoped-for savior of civilization, because the Anglo-American spirit there was being overwhelmed by the mass immigration from other parts of Europe, a view which was forcibly argued in 1868 by the erratically visionary statesman, Charles Wentworth Dilke:

> While the Celtic men are pouring into New York and Boston, the New Englanders and New Yorkers, too, are moving. They are not dying. . . . They are going West. . . .
>
> The Saxons are disappearing from the Atlantic cities, as the Spaniards have gone from Mexico. The Irish are beating down the English, as the English have crushed out the Dutch. . . .
>
> The matter is grave enough already. Ten years ago, the third and fourth cities of the world, New York and Philadelphia, were as English as London: the one is Irish now; the other all but German. Not that the Quaker city will remain Teutonic: the Germans, too, are going out upon the land; the Irish alone pour in unceasingly. All great American towns will soon be Celtic, while the country continues English: a fierce and easily-aroused people will throng the cities, while the law-abiding Saxons who till the land will cease to rule it. Our relations with America are matters of small moment by the side of the one great question: Who are the Americans to be?

The obvious answer, and one that was to become even more clear during the next forty years of the immigration from Central and Eastern Europe, was that the Americans were not going to be Englishmen, and with that a dream faded.

By the 1870's, Britain was beginning to feel its weakness in the face of the rising power of Germany as well as of the United States, and it was the English and not the Americans who then began to speak urgently of a special relationship. "Once for all," proclaimed Froude in New York, "I insist that England and America do not stand to one another as foreign nations: foreign in the sense that France or Russia is foreign to us both. Politically separate we may be, but we cannot shake off our relationship. . . . We may quarrel, and when we quarrel it will be with the peculiar bitterness which distinguishes family disputes. But the very acrimony is itself an evidence of the closeness of the tie which binds us." From then on this was to be one of the main English themes, and the foundation of English policy. The English let slip no opportunity of demonstrating their sympathy with the United States: there was an astonishing outburst of it at the death of James Garfield, when the editor of the *Contemporary Review* wrote of the "wholly unobstructed play of the natural sympathies of kinship between the two English-speaking peoples"; and from then on the theme and the hope were steadily elaborated: that Britain might continue to "rule" the world, as one of the two leaders of the Anglo-Saxon race, in alliance and even in federation with America.

This was the significance of the emphasis on the Anglo-Saxon race, even at the very moment at which the mass immigration was gathering. "They [the United States] are a powerful and generous nation," said Joseph Chamberlain in 1898. "They speak our language, they are bred of our race. . . . And I will even go so far as to say that, terrible as war may be, even war itself would be cheaply purchased if in a great and noble cause the Stars and Stripes and the Union Jack should wave together over an Anglo-Saxon alliance." He did not live to see his hope terribly realized in the trenches of World War I.

The Americans were surprised and delighted at the unanimous support which the English people gave them in the Spanish-American war, but the British public mind had been moving rapidly from the awareness of Britain's increasing weakness to the need for an American alliance. In a letter in 1898, Edward Dowden was explicit: "My sympathies are rather with the country of Mark Twain than with that of Cervantes—partly, I fear, because it seems to be for the advantage of England to draw close to the United States."

The two obvious examples of this alliance were the Anglo-American cooperation in the two world wars, especially in World War II, because Britain's solitary position after the collapse of France made it the only *Western* ally of America—the alliance with Russia was of a very different nature—in a way in which it had not been in World War I. And from this cooperation the legend of the "special relationship" was perpetuated until Suez.

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"It is a marriage," said Isaiah Berlin, as late as 1949, even after the collapse of British power in the Eastern Mediterranean, "from which, in the view of one of the partners at least—the Americans—there is no hope, or fear, of ultimate divorce. The marriage may at times be unhappy, but it cannot be annulled without destroying both partners equally." But this was wishful thinking, soon to be exposed by John Foster Dulles.*

But what one must hold on to in all this—for it is not simply a story, instructive as it is, of what a shift in the balance of power can mean to once great nations which are losing their advantage—is the troubled question of Dilke a century ago: "Who are the Americans to be?" He may have put it in terms of the "Anglo-Saxon" race, but it is a question that the Old World keeps putting about—and to—the New World, believing that it really is new. One can hear it, not only from old Europe, but from old Russia; from old China, and the whole of old Asia; even from old Africa: from all the *Orbis Terrarum* of the Old World, wondering what this New World yet will be, fearing and hoping at the same time, anxious but still looking to be saved.

For the pro-Americanism and the anti-Americanism in these attitudes are again interwoven. The problem was described well more than twenty years ago in an article in *Encounter* by Peregrine Worsthorne, who had by that time been a British correspondent in America during the period of anti-American feeling in the early 1950's. He pointed out that the United States had in the past been widely regarded as the European conscience. It had ideals which Europe, if it had ever possessed them, had long since had to sacrifice; it could afford to have ideals—its remoteness and its isolation, to say nothing of its own ideology and experience, meant that it could be a teacher and an exemplar to the Old World, however unwilling the Europeans were to be obedient pupils.

Worsthorne was right in this. Not every Englishman has felt as certain and enthusiastic as John Bright, but he was uttering a general conviction and hope, when he wrote to John Cobden in September 1860:

> What a glorious isolation is that of the United States. Until we adopt this principle, I see no security for us or for Europe—for until then, every disturbance in Europe is made the pretext for a greater expenditure here, and we are constantly in a state of preparation to plunge into the chaos of any Continental entanglement.

The example of America, even without its exertions, might yet save the world. "To any intelligent European who comes to the United States fresh from the distractions, despairs, and inanities of the Old World," wrote Bertrand Russell around 1938, "it is evident that the future of civilization and the chief possibility of hope for mankind is to be found in America." In spite of every disappointment, the hope always returns, for, if one cannot look to America for that hope, where on earth may it be found?

But as Worsthorne pointed out in his *Encounter* article:

> Since the Second World War . . . [the United States] has become the European shield instead of the European conscience. The two functions are mutually incompatible. The responsibilities of the United States for the defense of the free world inevitably tend to weaken her potency as the symbol and touchstone of political liberty, and her role as the conscience of Europe inevitably tends to weaken the effectiveness of the shield.

He went on to make the point that Europe has always expected of the United States an exceptional standard of behavior:

> For some reason, Europe accepts the idea that America is a country with a difference, from whom it is reasonable to demand an exceptionally altruistic standard of behavior. It feels perfectly justified in pouring obloquy on shortcomings from the ideal; and alas, perhaps inevitably, it seems to enjoy every example of a fall from grace which contemporary America provides.

This is why there is an edge to every other country's criticisms of the United States and its conduct, which is not to be found in the criticism of any other country. The hope that it will be different is there, as William Clarke wrote in 1881:

> The standing armies, the monarchies, the aristocracies, the huge debts, the crushing taxation, the old inveterate abuses, which flourish in Europe, can take no root in the New World. The continent of America is consecrated to simple humanity, and its institutions exist for the progress and happiness of the whole people.

But there now *are* the standing armies of America; there now *is* something that, from time to time, looks very like a monarchy; there now *is* a permitted degree of inherited wealth that is creating some of the elements of an aristocracy; there now *is* taxation that is crushing: is that all, then, that it has come to, a repetition in the New World of the inveterate abuses of the Old?

The hope, and the anxiety that it will be disappointed—that there will be found in America as in Europe only fear and failure at the heart

* As far as I know, no one has properly investigated the fact that the Republican party during the past half-century has been fundamentally "anti-European," thus explaining, in spite of the rest of its "ideology," its isolationism in the 1920's and 1930's, the ease with which Dulles took the same stance as Russia at the time of Suez and now the "détente" with Russia and China since 1969. In contrast, Dean Acheson was as a Democrat typically a "European."

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of the world—is one of the roots of anti-Americanism, making it again a phenomenon of its own, and giving it a peculiar acrimony. Is this last and best hope of mankind, this last new civilization, this final empire, only to go the way of all others? And there is in this form of anti-Americanism abroad something of the same unhistorical attitude to American history that is to be found in the anti-American within the United States. The idea that there is a manifest destiny for the United States to fulfill is not one that has been confined to the Americans, or that has taken only one form. Anti-Americanism is in this form a protest, not against Americanism, but against its apparent failure.

But the ambivalence drives deeper than that. When the news of the Boston Massacre reached London in 1770, Horace Walpole said of America, even before it was a nation, "I have many visions about that country"; and he wrote six months before the Declaration of Independence: "Europe is very worn out. It is America's turn to be fertile of genius." When he visited the United States in 1853, W. M. Thackeray wrote to Lady Stanley: "Here is the future: here is the great English empire to be when the Gauls and Cossacks have trampled on our freedom." A little later, Matthew Arnold said: "I speak with more than respect, with warm interest, of a great nation of English blood, and with which, in large measure, rests the future of the world." Twenty years later still, Herbert Spencer was unreserved: "It may, I think, be concluded that, both because of its size and the heterogeneity of its components, the American nation will be a long time in evolving its ultimate form, but that its ultimate form will be high. . . . I think that whatever difficulties they may have to surmount, and whatever tribulations they may have to pass through, the Americans may reasonably look forward to a time when they will have produced a civilization grander than any the world has known."

The voices are powerful, and their hope confident. Yet the idea has also persisted—even though, as Worsthorne said, "American cultural dominance is nearly complete"—that the United States may not really be civilized, that it cannot really be trusted with either its cultural inheritance from Europe, or even its own new culture, that "the spirit cannot live there," as Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson once put it in a letter to E. M. Forster; in short, that the Americans are today the Romans—no one seems to deny that—to whom the English and Europeans are the Greeks.

Harold Macmillan was always fond of drawing this parallel—he would speak of John Kennedy as if he were some upstart Roman emperor who had been thrust to power by his legions in a remote province—and he used to utter this sentiment, not only with a world-weariness that suggested that European and English culture had all the time in the world to civilize the New World, but as if the analogy were his own invention. Yet it has often been used. In 1913, Rupert Brooke wrote to Edward Marsh from San Francisco: "I can't for the life of me help moving about like a metropolitan among rustics, or an Athenian in Thrace. Their wide-mouthed awe at England is so touching—they really are merely a colony of ours still. That they should be speaking to a man who knows Lowes Dickinson, who has met Galsworthy, who once saw Belloc plain!" He might have been speaking as a representative of the Hellenistic civilization that for so long dominated the Roman world; as either Diogenes or Carneades or Critolaus, the three Greek philosophers who went to Rome from Athens in 155 B.C.E.

In 1929, another English writer, W. M. Lloyd, said: "Greece, as we know, made a captive of her conquerors, and there is hope that European culture will achieve a like triumph." A few days before the assassination of John Kennedy, T. H. White, who delighted in the variety and energy of American life, could nevertheless imagine the Roman parallel with great elaboration:

> America is a bit like ancient Rome. She has her Senators and Presidents from families of power and riches. Roosevelts and Kennedys might just as well be Claudians and Aurelians. We are their cultivated Greeks, they are our powerful Romans. . . .
>
> I foresee a time when the President of the United States will be as powerful and vicious as Caligula. We are in Republican Rome at present, the Emperors of America have yet to seize power. . . .
>
> Our first step will have to be an Augustan. Kennedy, a venerable statesman who has completed his seventh term of office and preserved the nation from the atomic bomb, will reluctantly accept the title of Father of his Country. Intrigue, regicide, and absolute power will set in. It won't be far after that to reach Nero Capone, say a hundred and fifty years from now.

"The humanity of the United States can never reach the sublime," wrote John Keats to his brother and sister-in-law (emigrants to America) in 1818. To Ruskin, America was only an imitator: "England taught the Americans all they have of speech or thought, hitherto. What thoughts they have not learned from England are foolish thoughts; what words they have not learned from England, unseemly words; the vile among them not being able to be humorous parrots, but only obscene mocking birds." Lowes Dickinson thought that America was laying the foundations of a city, but "my interest is in the songs that are one day to be sung in it—when? Generations hence, if ever." And so the voices in the chorus could be multiplied into this century.

Cyril Connolly was one of the first to question the parallel with Greece and Rome:

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> Now I am afraid it is only in America that the European races may grow to the full moral and mental stature of which they are capable. We are fond of making a wrong historical analogy: we talk of Europe which is about to be taken over by America as if it were Greece about to be conquered by Rome or Macedonia, in order to make the point that, with out superior civilization, we shall civilize our conquerors. But I am more inclined to see Washington as Byzantium. Washington may preserve the culture of the West for 1,000 years. . . . We are in no position to resist or blame. . . .The fallen Sampson can only exclaim to the American Delilah in Milton's words: *I led the way, bitter reproach, but true; / I to myself was false, ere thou to me.*

Even for the anti-American, there is perhaps more consolation in this than there at first seems, since recent scholarship and reinterpretations have made the Byzantine achievement seem much more considerable and aesthetically much more brilliant in its own right than it was once thought to be.

But there is something deeper in all this than a mere feeling of the superiority of European civilization; and it helps to explain the uneasiness that remains even when American art and literature have proved their command. In 1925, at about the same time as Ortega y Gasset was making much the same point, Osbert Burdett wrote:

> America is remarkable because there we find European human nature in the raw, namely, modern man as he is, apart from ancient traditions, ancestral customs, inherited memories, or a great past; transplanted to a soil in which his ancestors did not grow or live, or fight or die, but orphaned. The American is, thus, a civilized man without a civilization . . . uneasy till at last he shall have re-fashioned, on foundations laid at last, the index by which Europe and Asia find their way through the labyrinth of human existence: a sense of attachment to the past arising from a long sojourn in one place.

There is in fact a persisting belief—not that America is young, that is not the point—but that there is some experience that it has not yet *suffered* as have other nations, and which may even be denied to it; and once again this is a link between anti-Americanism and Americanism, at home and abroad, a cause of anxiety about its ability to comprehend its own challenge and opportunities.

THAT it has not *suffered*: that is the point made again and again. "America is only starting its history. It is only now that its trials, its dissensions, its conflicts are beginning," wrote Ortega y Gasset in *Revolt of the Masses* seventy years after the Civil War. "America has not yet suffered. It is an illusion to think it can possess the power of command." Matthew Arnold greeted the news of the assassination of Lincoln with an almost unbelievable outburst in a letter to his wife: "What tremendous news this is about Lincoln . . . this assassination brings into their history something of that dash of the tragic, romantic, and imaginative, which it has had so little of." As one could expect, Carlyle was as dourly threatening as ever. "America," he wrote in 1898, ". . . will have to crack its sinews, and all but break its heart, as the rest of us have had to do, in thousand-fold wrestles with the Pythus and mud-demons, before it can become a habitation for the gods. America's battle is yet to fight; and we, sorrowing though nothing doubting, will wish her strength for it . . . she will have her own agony. . . ." The theme was even extended by Bertrand Russell to the character of American women, which he found more "frivolous, more superficial, more pusillanimous" than that of European women who "have gone through the experience of many years' voluntary endurance of torture, which has given a depth and a richness to their natures that your easy-going, pleasure-loving women cannot imagine." It is the siren voice of the Old World at its most tempting.

Incredible as it may seem after the experiences of the past fifteen years, it can still be claimed that the United States has not yet suffered. At the bottom of many attitudes to America, there still lies the feeling that it shrugs or shuffles off its own agonies, that frivolously it even now engages in the Pursuit of Happiness, that it will not abandon its optimism, that it goes on believing that it can solve any problem, that the idea of Progress is not yet alien to it. But equally, when this notion is stood on its head—as in much of American literature in this century, and in the interpretations of American literature of the last century—as grotesque a myth can be sustained: as if a sense of tragedy must be *forced* into the American mind if it is to mature, as if the idea of original sin must be reinvented in America, as if it *must* be demonstrated that American history has been and will be like the history of the Old World, the nation forever torn in a conflict between the extremities of good and evil before it can find its soul; that, pray heaven, the road from Salem *will* lead to Saigon, that America may soon enjoy its decline, and pile its own ruins upon ruins as in Europe; and so be as blessed.

Whichever way one looks at it, one seems always to be standing at the pole of myth. The country is not allowed to be historical; the diurnal is not given the flavor of journalism; the attention to the quotidian—by which in fact the society from day to day survives—is diminished or rejected. Very little of what America has actually been or now actually is can be found *reported* in its literature. Even the history and journalism of and about America, as I have suggested, seem to slither all too easily into myth. One asks for bread, and is given a confection. A young teacher in American studies in Britain visited me not long ago, preparing to write something about Amer-

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ican violence. With the help of a few "facts" from *Time*, he was constructing the whole of his thesis out of Poe, out of Whitman, out of Melville, and I could not help wondering why he did not throw in Cooper and Leatherstocking. But he is not to be blamed when this is how Americans themselves *image* their society. "Novels like *Germinal* and *The Jungle* are not to be despised," Doris Lessing has said; and it is indeed true that if one wants to think about "violence in America," *The Jungle* is still not a bad place to start. Neither are the streets of Ulster, where many more people have been killed than in all the street riots in America in the past decade.

One can watch the myths as they are manufactured. The revisionist history to which American historians are so addicted today is all too often only the replacement of one myth by another. If they are not careful, they will succeed in making the Tory Loyalists the heroes of the bicentennial. The treatment of the Indians in America is being taken out of its historical context, with no reference to what was done to the Maoris in New Zealand or the Aborigines in Australia, or for that matter in this century to the Kurds in Russia. It may be all very well to bury one's heart at Wounded Knee; it seems an unnecessary sacrifice of one's good sense to bury one's mind there. It is a left-wing English critic, T. R. Fyvel, who has written: "A truth for American radicals to face is that were the Indians still roaming from Wounded Knee across the prairies of America where the wheatfields today [1973] extend, many millions of people in Asia and even in European Soviet Russia, would this year have gone hungry." This may not excuse, but it does help to explain; and one may recall in this context the observation of Oscar Wilde that "English people are far more interested in American barbarism than they are in American civilization."

What is more, that civilization is usually described only in material terms. The fact that this material progress has been inspired by two ideas—that men may act beneficently in their environment and their own circumstances, and that the benefits of this material progress can be made accessible to all—is ignored. The improvement of the day-to-day lives of ordinary people, which has owed so much to the inspiration of America, is disparaged. Moreover, with this material progress there has been carried also the idea that culture might equally be made accessible to all. As soon as a mining town like Central City in Colorado was settled, it built an opera house. The rude miners of Leadville, 10,000 feet up in the Rocky Mountains, invited Oscar Wilde very early to lecture them on "The Ethics of Art." Even high culture was not presumed to be only for a minority, and this again has been an American influence on modern civilization.

The wish that America should *suffer*—more than in the harrowing early years in Jamestown? more than on the frontier of Massachusetts? more than Jonathan Edwards? more than Roger Williams? more than in the heroic endurance of the pioneers? more than in the Civil War? more than in the suffering of the immigrants? more than in the Depression? more than John Kennedy? more than Robert Kennedy? more than in Vietnam?—is in part the voice of the dying civilization of the Old World, which has wished to be saved by the New World—there is no doubt about that—but to preserve its own civilization, all that used to be understood as Christendom, and not to have to acknowledge that another civilization may have come into being.

MUCH of our art and literature today is the art and literature of Europe in its decline; and one often wonders why the art and literature of America in this century has seemed so determined to follow its lead. Perhaps the most athletic worshipper of art in our time, Herbert Read, said that modern art "shares those elements of revolt and dissolution, of violence and fragmentation, of destruction and reconstruction, that give the political development of Europe in our time its intrinsic meaning." That may well be true of Europe. Life is short, it cries at the end of its millennial supremacy, so let art be shorter, that it may correspond; broken and fragmented, let it mirror our shiftiness.

Yet in its decline, it does not trust because it cannot comprehend the new civilization that has grown outside the *Orbis Terrarum*. The future of the world lies with America—that has not been questioned for two centuries—yet in America the life of the spirit is killed "not accidentally or temporarily, but inevitably and eternally," as Lowes Dickinson again put it. If one believes this to be true, the prospect is bleak, and much of the despairing literature of Europe during the past two centuries, the literature of the "decline of the West," may be explained in terms of this overwheming recognition, on the one hand, that it is in the United States that "the burden of world history shall reveal itself," as Hegel said, and the no less overwhelming (and demoralizing) belief that in America the life of the spirit, nourished for so long by Europe, will at last be extinguished. To understand that the leadership of the West had passed to the United States, but not to believe in the spirit of America, or even that the spirit could live in America: was this not the empty valley of the hollow men, the broken columns, the lost kingdoms, the dead land, the broken jaw, the whimper at the world's end? The decline of the West, as it was described by Spengler at the end of World War I, was the decline of Europe; he barely mentioned the United States. Morever, the American himself seems to be made anxious by the thought that the European culture to which he feels drawn, even as he

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pulls away from it, may in fact be dead, leaving him alone; and rather than bear this final separation, he too will take his stand on the ruins among which the European moves.

Both in America and abroad, one of the explanations of anti-Americanism is that Europe in its death throes still has its fingers at America's throat. The American experience is still not allowed to speak separately to the European experience. "Is this not the essence of the modern belief about the artist," Lionel Trilling asked of *The Heart of Darkness*, "the man who goes down into the hell which is the historical beginning of the human soul?": finding it in the primitive life in the jungle. But Trilling ignores something in Conrad—that is also present very strongly in Kipling—which marks a difference between the European experience and the American. In its failing years, with a failing strength, Europe went forth to subdue the continents to which it had roamed, and it encountered their vastness and intractability: the menace of the jungle and the desert, the sierra and the pampas. What a speck of dust blown down the *khud*, as Kipling said, was the civilized European man before these inert continental masses of the wilderness and the primitive, and they stood dumbfounded before their terrors. But that was not the experience of the American; he gazed on his continent and its wilderness, and determined that it should be civilized, won, and farmed. No matter what the cost in human life, that was his achievement.

Whenever he strayed from the garden that he had made in his island peninsula, the European was in danger of being overcome by terror and superstition: but not the European who became an American. It was not by superstition or myth that America was made, but by the rejection of them; not out of a nightmare of "that hell which is the historical beginning of the human soul," but out of the awakening of the human reason which was the historical beginning of our democratic societies. The history of the United States has yet to be long; its art and its literature should be preparing to be long as well, to be marching with it in step, and not always to be shifting their feet from experiment to experiment, fragment to fragment, accomplishing only their own ruins, only an imitation of the ruins among which the ghosts of European culture are now doomed to exercise.

There is a deep importance in the fact that anti-Americanism abroad tends to be strongest when America itself seems to have lost confidence in its own idea. Why should the world trust America if it does not trust itself? Why should it welcome the new civilization, and find hope in it, if the Americans themselves are already imagining its decay and dissolution? Why should they understand what it means to be "Americanized," as the world is being Americanized, when the Americans themselves seem to be unsure that they like being Americans? Anti-Americanism in the rest of the world returns in cycles, because cycles of self-doubt, as I said at the beginning, keep returning in the public mind of America.

For at the root of all anti-Americanism, and of the expressions of it which have been explored here, is both the understanding that the world is being Americanized and a fear of the process. In short, anti-Americanism is a response to the strength of Americanism, the awareness of a new and powerful force in the world; and this is one reason why it is a phenomenon with no parallel in the past.

For example, the English have always been darkly suspicious of foreigners; far more than the French themselves, they have adopted the French proverb that good fences make good neighbors. When I was a schoolboy, the phrase that "all niggers begin at Calais" was still heard. The French were Frogs, the Germans were Boches, the Italians were Wops, and everyone east and south of Naples was a Wog. There were reasons for this. Ever since the brilliant flowering of the English national spirit in the Elizabeth age, England had again and again to save herself "by her exertions," and Europe "by her example"—from Philip II of Spain, from Louis XIV and Napoleon of France, from Wilhelm II and Hitler of Germany. Why should it not be suspicious of foreigners? After all, "God is an Englishman," a clergyman had proclaimed in the 16th century, and this was not a boast. How else could one imagine God—as a Spaniard?

But the suspicion of these foreigners was never an *-ism*. French culture might sometimes rule London, German philosophy was known to seize otherwise strong and healthy minds, Italy even before it was Italy was now and then the arbiter of English taste, and these were all resisted. But they were not *-isms* against which to be *anti-*; and the true significance of anti-Americanism as a phenomenon is that the phrase—with its *ism*—implies that there has been, and that there is, more to be resisted than the immense power and wealth of another nation, more even than the cultural imports that used to come to England from Europe, to be modified and absorbed, but a new and other civilization, whose existence is alternately denied and distrusted.

Anti-Americanism abroad, whatever the occasions for its expression, is merely one form of the continuing interest in and debate about the nature of Americanism, and of its power to Americanize. On various occasions and at exacerbating moments, it may seem more widespread and more vehement than at others. But the debate goes on, at the root of it the question to which most foreign observers have addressed themselves: what is the American to be?, and since we are becoming like Americans, what will we become?

It is the impact of Americanization that is at

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the core of anti-Americanism, where there is more than a scribble on a wall, "Yankee Go Home." One may think that Communism may spread from Russia or China to the rest of the globe; but no one thinks in terms of the "Russification" or "Chinafication" of the world. Even when French was the *lingua franca* of the Western world, and French culture held sway, as the American-English language and American culture today do, no one really felt that his own country was being "Frenchified." For more than a century, Britain strode the world, but there was never as strong a sense of "Anglicization" as there is now of Americanization; not even when the British empire was most far-flung, and the British were teaching the Indians and West Indians to speak English and read Spenser, play cricket and be gentlemen.

Yet it obviously makes sense, from London to Rome to Cairo to Colombo to Singapore to Tokyo to Sydney to say that the world is being Americanized. Indeed, one of the most remarkable things to notice in the television reports that Shirley MacLaine made on China—a point which of course she did not make—was how Westernized—in other words, how Americanized—the Chinese people, especially the younger ones, have become, as if dressed from Woolworth's. This process is usually observed only in its material manifestations, and it is overlooked that, with the traffic of its commerce and its arms, America carries also an idea. The energy of the American presence in the world is both welcomed and feared, both a cause of hope and a source of anxiety, because with its idea it keeps on unsettling the established forms of the past. Not merely old but ancient customs are surrendering to a presence that is not imposed and yet seems irresistible, to an idea that appears to be more powerful than the slogans of any revolution. "All American influence on Europe," said Cyril Connolly, "however vulgar, brings with it an improvement in the standard of living and dissipates certain age-old desires." While these are wanted, they are also resisted and questioned.

It is my own belief that the mere presence of America, what Americans have become and achieved in their own country, has done more to change the world, and improve the life of its peoples, than any revolution in the past two centuries. "An age will come after many years when the Ocean will loose the chains of things, and a huge land will lie revealed." Against this prophecy of Seneca, the son of Christopher Columbus wrote: "This prophecy was fulfilled by my father . . . the Admiral in the year 1492." But the prophecy is still being fulfilled in an even deeper sense; the American is still loosening the chains of things, not merely in his own continent, but in that very *Orbis Terrarum* in which the whole of the Old World was contained. In spite of the progress of Americanization, the influence still seems strange, precisely because it comes from elsewhere than the *Orbis Terrarum*, from that still New World.

IF THIS is understood, anti-Americanism becomes much more interesting than is usually recognized. Was America a mistake? That is the question that can be asked, as it cannot be asked of any old country. It was seriously, even if one cannot say deeply, debated by the *philosophes* of the 18th century. Most of them had not been to the New World, but that did not prevent them, as it has not prevented others in later years, from commenting freely on its conditions. Horace Walpole was at least momentarily affected by the opinion of the Comte de Buffon, that America was degenerate, that in that continent, "Nature is weaker, less active, and more circumscribed in the variety of her productions." And what was the evidence? Well, Buffon was obsessed by the fact that the tapir, although it looked like an elephant, was smaller than an elephant. "This animal, the elephant of the New World, exceeds not the size of a calf of six months old, or a very small mule." Great minds can sometimes be easily diverted.

The interest of their musings is the sensation, once more, that America was a new phenomenon in the world, for good or for ill. Those who feared the results of its discovery were afraid that the degeneracy of the New World would return to corrupt the Old; that its wealth would cause inflation in Europe and therefore in the end impoverishment, and that it would be morally calamitous by flooding the Old World with articles that were either useless, such as furs and gems, or pernicious, such as tobacco. The general influence of America, in short, would be like the particular influence of venereal disease. In fact, what we find in the responses of some of the *philosophes* is an early expression of the fear that the Old World would be Americanized; a fear that turned to welcome in 1776.

In this perspective, the phenomenon of anti-Americanism in the rest of the world is hardly to be feared, as long as it is understood. In a profound sense, it is the rest of the world asking of itself the question of Crèvecoeur: "Who is the American, this new man?" What *is* to be feared is the anti-Americanism in America itself which returns no answer from the experience of the new man in his own continent; from the historical experience of the country itself, its actual achievements and its actual failures; but instead sedulously and virulently retreats to a mythical interpretation of that experience which has no historical reality.

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The Slavery Debate

Stanley M. Elkins

BENEATH the debate that has been going on among English scholars over the state of the working classes during the Industrial Revolution lies a painful dilemma. One aspect of the question is all bound up with "immiseration": the demoralizing and brutalizing consequences of exploitation under the emerging industrial system. The other aspect is that of resistance to the exploitation, and *its* consequences: creative energy, the development of a distinctive cultural identity, a radical working-class literature and tradition. The dilemma, of course, is how you can emphasize vitality and achievement while you are also emphasizing decline and degradation. I mention this problem because of its resemblance to another that especially concerns me.* This is the debate that has proceeded for more than a decade over American black slavery.

In surveying the experience of any group subject to radical oppression and stress, and when your principal theme is damage, it is neither easy nor expedient to build in an alternative framework that provides adequately for resistance. On the other hand, there is bound to be resistance in *some* form, and this too needs to be recorded. And yet the more you make of it, the more you minimize the impact of brutality and exploitation upon powerlessness as a sociological, psychological, and moral fact. Although powerlessness corrupts, just as surely in its way as does power, our sympathy for the powerless puts limits on our tolerance of what their condition has done to them, and upon our willingness to survey the whole damage. Thus as resistance looms larger (both theirs and ours), the damage steadily shrinks; so, unavoidably, does the powerlessness; so, even, does the brutality itself. Indeed, it begins to look as though things generally were not so bad, after all, as they had been made out. Much of the strain in the current state of historical thinking on slavery is a reflection of this dilemma. Is there any resolution in sight? I have my doubts.

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I

THERE is a long tradition of writing about slavery that has put its primary stress upon brutality and damage. It goes at least as far back as Theodore Dwight Weld's *American Slavery as It Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses* (1839), which is still being quoted from; it includes Frederic Bancroft's bleak *Slave Trading in the Old South*, published nearly a century later; and its spirit suffuses the authors of the Myrdal series on the Negro in America done in the 1930's and 40's, at all those points where their work refers back to slavery. Slavery was always hotly debated, but the debate that dominated the subject in antebellum times, and continued in modified form well into the 20th century, was not at all the same debate I referred to above, the one that is in full swing now. Then, it was the evils of the system that preoccupied everyone, and the opposition's challenge was largely a matter of denying that the evils existed. Indeed, the Southerner Ulrich Phillips, whose work emphasized the benign aspects of the plantation regime and who thus managed to keep faith with his pro-slavery ancestors, was recognized for many years during the present century as the leading authority on the entire subject. That side of the debate, it goes without saying, was designed not to show how slaves resisted the system, but to mitigate and justify the practices of slaveholders.

But the abolitionists—we may as well call them that—were bound to win out, and the publication in 1956 of Kenneth Stampp's authoritative *The Peculiar Institution* signaled the final eclipse of Phillips's influence. My own book, *Slavery*, which came out three years later and which stressed the impact of an absolutist regime on slave personality, was actually part of that same tide, though I was hardly as willing to see it in such a way then as I am now. Stampp and I had our differences, but recent developments, as he wryly remarked to me not long ago, have retrospectively brought our

* The resemblance has been pointed out by R.M. Hartwell in an as yet unpublished paper, "Slave Labor and Factory Labor."

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positions a good deal closer together than they must have seemed then. I was a bit lofty about the need for value-free judgments, and I had some hard things to say about moralizing abolitionists. But for practical purposes I was one of them. I never once doubted, and certainly do not doubt now, that American chattel slavery was damaging to every man, woman, and child, white or black, who was in any way touched by it. I wanted to know what the damage was, and how it was done.

Now the tide has turned once more, having begun to do so in the later 1960's. Interest is now focused almost wholly upon resistance, resistance to the degradations of the slave regime that took a variety of forms, and upon something that was of scant concern to white scholars of a generation ago, the growth under slavery of a black culture. The two have become inseparable, culture itself functioning as a form of resistance. The new work examines slavery at many points and in considerable depth, but whatever else it does, the best of this work—indeed, most of the current output—involves a search for culture, and by now there is very little in any of it about damage.

Something should probably be said about the ideological climate in which both these arguments have functioned, the argument on damage that reached its peak in the mid-60's, and the one on culture that has come for the time being to supersede it in the attention of scholars and public.

The crest of the "damage" cycle in the early 1960's coincided almost perfectly with a state of mind regarding race relations whose dominant concern was integration and civil rights. Most of the writing done up to this time could function as both theoretical and ideological underpinning for the movement, and the writers themselves—historians, psychologists, sociologists, or whatever—were well aware of this. Each had contributed details to the catalogue of abuses that white society had heaped upon American blacks beginning with slavery, and of the damage for which, it was now earnestly felt, restitution must at last be made.

The spirit that animated the civil-rights movement was the hope of brotherhood, the conviction that the time had come when lines of separation on grounds of race should be resolutely swept away. The ideal had about it a certain grandeur, and one may still feel this in rereading, say, the writings of Howard Zinn on SNCC activities in the deep South. But there was another aspect of it that is clearer now than it seemed then. It was still very much—certainly in the work that had served to form the intellectual background—a matter of whites talking to whites. To be sure, there stood in that same background such black scholars as W.E.B. Du Bois, E. Franklin Frazier, Carter Woodson, and John Hope Franklin. But their work did not seem in the least inharmonious (Frazier's in particular was frequently referred to) with the perceptions of massive damage that permeated the writing of white intellectuals, and for which whites were guiltily considering remedies.

We may now see that such a situation—one in which whites told each other what was good for blacks, or at least took their own leadership in the interracial movement for granted—had its drawbacks. Still, it was not lacking in good will, and one can make too much of its condescensions. Moreover, there was one small advantage, for what it may have been worth. White intellectuals had not yet reached the point at which they would feel the need to weigh everything they said for its effect on an emergently aggressive black audience. The "civil-rights" phase, together with all the attitudes that had fashioned it, may be said to have reached a kind of benign meridian with President Lyndon Johnson's remarkable address at Howard University in June 1965. "Much of the Negro community," the President said, "is buried under a blanket of history and circumstance." Positive action, he declared, must be taken to repair the damage done by "ancient brutality, past injustice, and present prejudice."

Few could then have known how transitory this phase would prove to be, how swiftly the emphasis upon civil rights and integration (and "ancient brutality") would evaporate, and how suddenly black spokesmen would emerge everywhere insisting that what was good for blacks would henceforth be defined by them, and not by whites. It was all to leave white intellectuals in rather a state of shock. In 1969 Marcus Cunliffe, observing the academic scene with the wicked detachment of an uninvolved Englishman, reported a deep sense of strain: "White facial muscles ache with nervous smiling, black ones with intimidating scowls."* What could possibly have happened?

IN REVIEWING the precipitous change that occurred in the intellectual weather of the mid-1960's, one must see the famous Moynihan Report, together with what happened to it, as a truly critical event. Both the report and the program Moynihan hoped to initiate with it were smothered in a landslide of recrimination. The main details are familiar enough. As Assistant Secretary of Labor, Daniel P. Moynihan had given considerable thought to what he saw as the perilously demoralized state of the black family in Northern city ghettos, and the report he prepared on this subject was to open the way—or so he hoped—for a kind of sweeping domestic "Marshall Plan" of federal assistance to the black community. "Three centuries of injustice," he wrote, "have brought about deep-seated structural distortions in the life of the Negro American." He advanced a synthesis of historical findings, sociological diagnoses, and current statistics to show the various forms of destruction this "injustice" had brought about and which should now be remedied

* "Black Culture & White America," *Encounter*, January 1970, pp. 22-35.

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through programs in the realms of employment, education, housing, and welfare reform. Moynihan's report, which defined the problem but deferred discussion of the remedies for subsequent planning, was completed by the spring of 1965. Moynihan had meanwhile persuaded President Johnson to give his own blessing to its spirit and principles, and this was what the President did in his Howard University address that June, of which Moynihan himself was the chief draftsman.*

For the subsequent failure of the report, so prodigious in view of such promising beginnings, a variety of reasons could be assigned. These would certainly include covert resistance within the welfare bureaucracy, the piecemeal and somewhat lackadaisical way in which the report's contents were leaked to the public, inadequate briefings of the press, insufficient consultation with civil-rights leaders, and the draining away of official energy during the fall of 1965 amid the administration's mounting preoccupation with the war in Vietnam. But the deepest reason of all, the one that underlay all the others, was that without anyone's quite realizing it the entire "damage" argument—as applied to Negro life in America—had become ideologically untenable.

Simply as policy, Moynihan's conception had much to be said for it. Given its general Catholic working-class welfare perspective, there should have been nothing grossly unreasonable about assuming that the morale and well-being of any community depend in some way on the stability of the families that make it up, that exploitation and economic adversity place the family life of any community under severe strain, and that the primary object of any program of social welfare should lie in assisting hard-pressed fathers to support their families decently and provide a stable setting for their children to grow up in. (Needless to say, this was not the only theory on which social policy might have been based, but it had at least a rough consistency, and in any case theories are not everything.) And there was a potentially logical transition from this to the remedies Moynihan had had in mind all along: jobs, job training, education, public housing, and a welfare structure that did not put a premium on disrupted families or penalize families that had men present—in short, a massive federal commitment to rebuilding the economic life of black communities everywhere. Moreover, there is plenty of evidence that neither the generality of black spokesmen nor of white intellectuals had any real quarrel with the actual prescriptions Moynihan envisioned.

THE uproar came not over the remedies, but over the argument for them. The report itself was a relentless, insistent, dreary picture of unrelieved damage, designed to prove beyond any doubt that the condition of the urban black family in America had deteriorated to the point of disaster. Beginning with claims made by me regarding the stultifications of individual personality experienced under slavery, adding material of a similar kind from the psychologist Thomas F. Pettigrew, and bringing in E. Franklin Frazier's account of the disruptive consequences of slavery upon the black family as a persistent legacy, Moynihan then produced a series of very depressing contemporary statistics. They dealt with differential rates (between whites and blacks) of unemployment, illegitimacy, crime, low educational performance, women with absent husbands, children with absent fathers, and families headed by women. "It was by destroying the Negro family under slavery," Moynihan balefully warned, "that white America broke the will of the Negro people. Although that will has reasserted itself in our time, it is a resurgence doomed to frustration unless the viability of the Negro family is restored." The report was not originally intended for public release, and Moynihan did not write under the constraints that might have been imposed by touchy persons watching over his shoulder. It was written to persuade inside policy-makers that the problem was so serious in scale that nothing short of a total commitment was thinkable. He wanted his paper to be "shocking enough that they would say, 'Well, we can't let this sort of thing go on. We've got to do something about it.' "

Shocking it was, but to all the wrong people, and, in the end, with the very opposite results from those he had so fervently hoped for. What they saw, based on incomplete newspaper accounts, was a vast slur on the whole American black population, past and present. James Farmer ("I'm angry . . . really angry") exploded in the *Amsterdam News* upon learning that "we've caught 'matriarchy,' and 'the tangle of Negro pathology' . . . a social plague recently diagnosed by Daniel Moynihan. . . ." Roy Wilkins, who himself supported the report, explained somewhat apologetically that the black community resented the emphasis on the black family, "as if it were a moral criticism of themselves." They were egged on, moreover, by prehensile white liberals who were beginning to try on "radical" attitudes. William Ryan, a mental-health consultant, wrote a widely-circulated paper, which was printed both in the *Nation* and in NAACP's *Crisis,* in which he discussed "this smug document" without having read it. "The theme is: 'The Negro was not initially born inferior, he was made inferior by generations of harsh treatment.' Thus we continue to assert that the Negro is inferior while chastely maintaining that all men are equal." There is "no escape," Ryan declared, "in the world of sociological fakery." And the *Christian Century* loftily announced, after a discussion of the report's many

* Lee Rainwater and William Yancey, *The Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy* (MIT Press, 1967), is both a history of the report and a useful collection of documents pertaining to it.

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fallacies, that the real agenda ought to be "jobs, housing, and education"—the very matters Moynihan had had closest at heart.

Still, for all the fumbled handling of the report, one may wonder how much sustained intellectual support Moynihan could have had for his message in the years immediately ahead, no matter what tactics had been used to promote it. The entire climate in which white intellectuals had hitherto functioned was changing. Charles Silberman, who had himself made a major contribution to what I have been calling the literature of "damage," said as much in November 1965. The civil-rights phase, whose goals had been relatively simple and to a surprising degree successful, was over. The history of Negro-white relations, Silberman wrote,

> has entered a new and radically different stage —a stage so different from the recent or distant past as to make the familiar approaches and solutions obsolete, irrelevant, and sometimes even harmful. . . . What is new is that Negroes have begun to reveal and express—indeed, to act out—the anger and hatred they have always felt, but had always been obliged to hide and suppress behind a mask of sweet docility.

True, and white intellectuals would find the adjustment troublesome, especially with the rumblings of Black Power that arose shortly thereafter. The campus uprisings of 1968 and 1969 would leave many of them reeling. One of the byproducts of that period was demands everywhere for elaborate Black Studies programs, to which professors and administrators alike agreed with an almost benumbed alacrity. The new insistence now was upon "black culture"—an expression which, at least in the common currency, had been all but unknown in 1965.

Daniel P. Moynihan knew that for his purpose, as one observer put it, "he needed to point to what poor Negroes were deprived of, not to how they managed to make out despite their deprivations." And yet it was precisely the latter point, not the former, that had now come to seem all-important: "how they managed to make out." In short, it was no longer damage they wanted to hear about and talk about, but resistance.

II

Such, then, was the ideological bridge from "damage" to "resistance"—or, to put it more comprehensively, to "culture." But there was another kind of bridge as well, one of intellect and sensibility. And it was this, I think, that gave the search for black culture the authenticity and legitimacy to which it was entitled, and still is entitled. The most impressive example of this point that I know of is that provided by Ralph Ellison.

The demand for a new vision of the American black experience that emerged in the later 1960's was, for Ellison, far more than a fashionable novelty. Early in his career Ellison saw "social science" for the standing menace that it is to any true literary mind under any circumstances. But a more particular menace lay in social-science categories as applied indiscriminately to the aggregate experience of American blacks. Efforts in the realm of psychology and sociology could, undertaken in good faith as most of them now were, appeal to the white conscience. By exhibiting, as they were bound to do, the injustice and degradation visited upon blacks from time out of mind, they could conceivably move white society to sweep away the barriers that had hitherto prevented blacks from taking their rightful place as full participants in the common current of American life.

So far, so good; Ellison had no quarrel with that. But social science cannot possibly stop there, and well before it does stop, it has already taken away something that for Ellison was life itself. In every such undertaking there are two deadening implications. One is that the collectivity of blacks must be seen as essentially inert; the other, that when all this prejudice and discrimination is removed, blacks would somehow become undifferentiated Americans. Their past—by definition an ugly pathological blot—would be wiped out; their distinctive character, experience, contributions, and culture would in effect be denied, would really no longer exist. Brotherhood: splendid. The races cannot function separately, and in fact never have. But this was not it. This, for Ralph Ellison, were merely a new device of stultification.

Thus Ellison's responses to such material as it appeared were always measured (since he knew what he wanted) with a special nicety. He also retained a remarkable consistency over time, as two or three examples may show.

As early as 1944 Ellison wrote a review of Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma*, a book widely acclaimed by whites (whose consciences were powerfully stirred) as well as by blacks (who saw white society as beginning at last to wake up). He praised Myrdal's book for its many insights, some of them "brilliant," and for offering the key "to a more democratic and fruitful usage of the South's natural and human resources." But when Myrdal asserted in effect that the Negro's life, his thoughts —and presumably his personality and his culture— "are, in the main, to be considered as secondary reactions to more primary pressures from the side of the dominant white majority," the young Ralph Ellison's hand came sharply down on the table. Can a people, he demanded,

> live and develop for over three hundred years simply by *reacting*? Are American Negroes simply the creation of white men, or have they at least helped to create themselves out of what they found around them? Men have made a way of life in caves and upon cliffs, why cannot Negroes have made a life upon the horns of the white man's dilemma? . . .

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> It does not occur to Myrdal that many of the Negro cultural manifestations which he considers merely reflective might also embody a *rejection* of what he considers "higher values." . . . It is only partially true that Negroes turn away from white patterns because they are refused participation. There is nothing like distance to create objectivity, and exclusion gives rise to counter values.

This was written for *Antioch Review;* the editor—for whatever reasons—did not print it. But twenty years later Ralph Ellison, now famous as the author of one of the most important novels of the period, made another statement. The occasion this time was a lead review, for a national audience, of Howard Zinn's *The Southern Mystique* in 1964. Again he made discriminations. He praised Zinn for his good will, his expenditures in deeds as well as words in the cause of civil rights, and his desire for massive contacts between blacks and whites. But when Zinn came to insist that history no longer mattered in the face of the Negro's new self-assertion, and of the white South's new willingness to make unwanted adjustments, Ellison once more drew the line.

Zinn had been impressed by my book, *Slavery,* and its discussion of the "Sambo" personality, which he thought explained much about the history that no longer mattered. ("That personality also becomes, Elkins suggests, reversible.") Ellison would have none of this. Zinn had let himself be taken in, "both by Elkins and by his own need to recreate man, or at least Negro man, in terms of the expediencies of the historical moment." The black American is something more than "a physical fact and a social artifice."

> He is the product of the synthesis of his blood mixture, his social experience, and what he has made of his predicament, i.e., his *culture.* And his quality of wonder and his heroism alike spring no less from his brutalization than from that culture.

Three years later Ellison was at it again, this time in an extended interview with three young black writers, which appeared in *Harper's* magazine. He condemned the Moynihan report; at the same time he praised President Johnson's Howard University speech (which was simple, direct, and unargumentative), though both had come from the same pen. Once again, he warned the young men against Elkins.* We depend, he said, "upon outsiders—mainly sociologists—to interpret our lives for us." What all their abstractions left out—once again—was culture.

In the years immediately ahead, Ellison's message would make a deep impression upon black intellectuals—though not upon all, precluding as it did the extreme positions of black nationalism. But to chastened whites the appeal was irresistible, especially to those writing about slavery.

III

THE literature on American slavery that has appeared in the past four or five years, and continues to appear, is impressive in both depth and bulk. Among the many themes in it that will strike the casual reader is the strong belief of nearly every writer in the cultural bias of all who came before. Each also believes he has uncovered new material, which in a number of cases is true, and that the more familiar material, hitherto misinterpreted, is being properly read for the first time. None is primarily concerned with damage; all are preoccupied with resistance and culture.†

John W. Blassingame's *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (1972), for instance (according to its author), "breaks sharply with American historiographic tradition." It rests on "new kinds of sources, viewed from different angles," which previous historians have "deliberately ignored." The typical pattern of plantation life was sufficiently open that the slave's individuality was in fact not crushed, and the picture most historians have drawn (using only planters' records and material from the white side of things) "of an all-powerful, monolithic institution which strip[ped] the slave of any meaningful and distinct culture, family life, religion, or manhood," is simply false. A far more accurate one would show a rich, diverse, and variegated community life in which family (the slave family was not destroyed either), religion, and a body of lore served as mechanisms of resistance against the debilitating effects the slave system was formerly supposed to have had. The slave's own contribution to the total picture—with the music, folktales, religion, and surviving autobiographies as evidence—must be brought to the foreground if this culture is to be fully seen for what it was.

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* Note from the beleaguered Elkins: I am here conceding the full validity of Ellison's case. Naturally I will be taking some of it back later on.

† I have concerned myself in the following discussion with works that deal directly with plantation life. A number of distinguished studies on slavery, or bearing on slavery, have appeared in the past decade which fall outside this category, and my omission of them here is in no way a judgment on their importance. Among them are David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (1966) and *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (1975); Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (1968) and *The White Man's Burden: Historical Origins of Racism in the United States* (1974); George M. Frederickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (1971); and Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (1975). Carl N. Degler's *Neither Black nor White: Slavery and Race Relations in Brazil and the United States* (1971) I have written about at length elsewhere (*Journal of Negro History,* January 1973, pp. 86-90). Ira Berlin's fine *Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (1974) gives considerable support to my concluding point in the present essay.

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As it happened, Blassingame's book was not received with much enthusiasm, though not because of its basic argument, which was already familiar and had by this time come to be widely accepted in principle. It was rather that reviewers thought his conclusions not as original as he claimed them to be, and that he had neglected to exploit a large mass of readily available evidence—the WPA interviews with former slaves—of the very sort that should have been most pertinent to his case. But a more serious difficulty lay in Blassingame's being so locked in combat with a previous version of slave personality, and so repeatedly denying its legitimacy, that he never quite got around to explaining what *did* go into the making of this culture, or what its distinctive character was, or how it got that way. It seems to have been entirely a culture of resistance, but there is surprisingly little interest shown in the nature of what it was that was being resisted. As Eugene Genovese points out in *Roll, Jordan, Roll,* one cannot begin to understand slave society—personality, culture, or anything else—without seeing the mutuality of the master-slave relationship as an indispensable key to it. In a society where men are enslaved by other men, human relationships must at least be taken as something special, and its human products—on both sides—as special too. Whereas the slave, at the end of Blassingame's book, "was no different in most ways from most men. The same range of personality types existed in the quarters as in the mansion." If slavery in practice made no more difference than that, perhaps the entire subject of slavery is less important than we thought.

George P. Rawick offered an argument the same year, 1972, which was in many respects similar. *From Sundown to Sunup: The Making of the Black Community* was the introductory volume to a nineteen-volume edition of slave narrative materials, hitherto mostly unpublished, the bulk of which represented the work originally done by the WPA Writers' Project in the 1930's. Rawick's preparation and publication of these materials, making them readily accessible for the first time, was an enormously valuable contribution. *From Sundown to Sunup,* presented as an interpretive study to accompany them, may thus be seen in two capacities—as a separate entity and as part of a larger undertaking.

Another theme that permeates all the new literature is a strong emphasis on "community." Rawick puts the word in his title (as does Blassingame); he even extends its meaning at many points to embrace blacks all over America, slave and free alike. As for slavery, "almost all historians have presented the black slaves as dehumanized victims, without culture, history, community, change, or development." Rawick, like Blassingame, believes this view of plantation slavery should be exchanged for one which recognizes the "social space" allowed by the system for both survival and resistance. He, too, insists on the positive functions of the slave family, slave religion, and slave folklore for tightening the internal bonds of community. And he, too, is convinced that the slave personality was certainly "not one that should be described . . . as 'infantile.'" A perpetual state of rebellion, among other things, kept it from becoming so.

Whatever the merits of Rawick's essay, one is perplexed about the kind of relationship that was intended between it and the eighteen volumes of source materials that follow it, materials being presented as a major new body of evidence for the study of American slavery. The ambiguity may be suggested by two examples. One is incidental to Rawick's assumptions about a nationwide antebellum black "community." "The abolitionist movement," he writes,

> was essentially a product of the black community, though whites played a role in it. Abolitionism was at all times dominated by Afro-American freedmen, not by whites, although the inherent racism of American ideology has obscured that fact, not only for present-day Americans but for most whites—with the notable exceptions for such men as James [*sic*] Wentworth Higginson and Wendell Phillips—who participated in the movement.

There is nothing in Rawick's evidence—eighteen volumes of it—to support such an extraordinary assertion, nor, so far as I know, in anyone else's evidence either.* The other example concerns personality. "The slave narratives are the richest source we have ever had for a description of slave personality." Rawick is surely right there, except that the only systematic analysis that has been made of the narratives for this purpose (by the sociologist Norman R. Yetman, who inferred from them that plantation life, on the large holdings in particular, did in fact create a dependent personality type) offers conclusions very different from his own.† Evidence, it seems, does not always speak for itself. On what sort of authority, in such cases, do we decide what it *ought* to say?

Two new books on specific areas of slave culture will very shortly appear, one on songs and folk-tales by Lawrence Levine, and the other on the family by Herbert Gutman;

* William Lloyd Garrison had substantial support for his *Liberator* from free blacks, and there were, of course, some notable black abolitionists. But these men came nowhere close to being a majority, and the high-handed manner in which the whites relegated them to a subordinate role in the movement was notorious. Moreover, though there was a significant class of reform-minded black leaders and publicists in the antebellum North, Frederick Cooper argues that they gave a relatively minor share of their attention to abolition. See "Elevating the Race: The Social Thought of Black Leaders, 1827-50," *American Quarterly,* December 1972, pp. 604-625.

† "The Slave Personality: A Test of the 'Sambo' Hypothesis" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1969). Yetman made no attempt at the time to publish this work, though he may yet do so in some form.

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unlike the works just referred to, these are not likely to have any aspersions cast on their scholarly thoroughness. Gutman's I can discuss with confidence, having the manuscript before me; with Levine's I shall have to be more tentative, limiting myself to an observation or two based on three substantial published essays reflecting work in progress.* The work of both is scrupulous, accurate, and authoritative, and should prove to be influential. Let me say something about Levine's first.

Levine, like other recent writers, is gravely concerned—no doubt justifiably—over the errors of his predecessors and the undependability of their work. Their research has been "narrow and culture-bound," and they have treated the distinctive features of black history "not as cultural forms but as disorganization and pathology." Even those who first collected the primary materials he is working with are not to be trusted. They "had little understanding of the culture from which [the songs and folk-tales] sprang, and little scruple about altering or suppressing them." Historians up to now "have rendered an articulate people historically inarticulate." Levine would like to render them articulate again, and so far he has done a very good job of it. Moreover, he has taken to heart Ralph Ellison's admonition that "if you would tell me who I am, at least take the trouble to discover what I have been."

Examining slave songs as a key to slave consciousness, Levine makes two points that are both convincing and enlightening. One is that they represented "a distinctive cultural form," owing less to either white influence or African origins than to the circumstances of American slave life. The other concerns the extraordinarily fluid, improvisational character of this music. (When James McKim during the Civil War asked where the slaves got their songs, he was told, "Dey make em, sah.") It is wrong, Levine feels, to "conceive of slavery as a closed system which destroyed the vitality of the Negro and left him a dependent child," since it "never prevented the slaves from carving out independent cultural forms." And he argues throughout that these forms were a product of community, created out of a "communal consciousness."

The case for "community" holds up very well throughout the entire discussion of music, and is especially persuasive with regard to the spirituals. But with the folk-tales the claim is dropped; there, with entirely different forces at work, it somehow does not apply at all. This disjunction creates some puzzles. The Brer Rabbit trickster stories were certainly not the only kind, though they seem to have been the most popular. They were "didactic"; they gave instruction on how the weak must make their way in a world of hypocrisy and superior power—by tricking not only the strong but also each other. Many of Brer Rabbit's tricks are responses to the requirement of self-defense and survival. But many others seem gratuitous and purposeless. He steals or cheats the other animals out of more of their food than he needs; he not only persuades them to help him out of traps but tricks them into taking his place; a lady who resists his wooing he kills, skins, and smokes over hickory chips. He assembles his neighbors to help him build a spring house, and when this act of community is accomplished, he has them all drowned. Brer Wolf seeks revenge upon Brer Rabbit (for having boiled Wolf's grandmother and tricked Wolf into eating her), whereupon Rabbit callously sacrifices his own wife and children to save himself. There may be much "complexity and ambiguity" in the tales, as Levine insists, and "levels of meaning," but one thing about them is clear and simple enough: their "hero" is at best one nasty little hustler. The world he confronts and in which he survives, he also helps to perpetuate. He certainly does nothing to improve it. In that world of lying, stealing, duplicity, and murder there is no friendship, no affection, and no mutual trust; "family" counts for nothing, and of "community" there is not a shred. If this particular body of lore represents a form of psychic adjustment to slavery, as Levine seems to have proved, one is reluctant to take it as a very positive one. There were undoubtedly others, as we shall see when the rest of his evidence is in.

HERBERT GUTMAN'S *The Invisible Fact: Afro-Americans and their Families, 1750–1925*† has an excellent chance of being received, along with Eugene Genovese's *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, as one of the two most important works of the 1970's on American plantation slavery. Its comprehensive scholarship and its technical skill as a work of social history will give it considerable effectiveness. It breathes with polemical passion, which raises problems, but its argument will be listened to, and I think with respect.

The particular vehicle for the growth and transmission of culture that concerns Gutman is the slave family. Using techniques of family reconstitution originally developed by historical demographers, and working with extraordinary persistence and imagination, he pieces out a picture of a widespread, complex family and kinship structure that evolved over a long period of time, in some cases extending back as far as the early 18th cen-

* The essays I am referring to and quoting from are: "Slave Songs and Slave Consciousness: An Exploration of Neglected Sources," in Tamara K. Hareven, ed., *Anonymous Americans: Explorations in Nineteenth-Century History* (Prentice-Hall, 1971), pp. 99-130; "The Concept of the New Negro and the Realities of Black Culture," in Nathan I. Huggins *et al.*, eds., *Key Issues in the Afro-American Experience* (Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1971), II, pp. 125-149; and "'Some Go Up and Some Go Down': The Meaning of the Slave Trickster," in Stanley Elkins and Eric McKitrick, eds., *The Hofstadter Aegis: A Memorial* (Knopf, 1974), pp. 94-124.

† To be published in the fall of '76 by Pantheon.

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tury.* The members of that network could thus draw on a rich fund of accumulated experience. Gutman makes very ingenious use of the records of several large plantation units, one set of which had been kept over four generations and (in this particular case) without any slave's having been sold. Certain striking patterns emerge. One is a clear continuity of family groupings, some of whose earliest members were African-born. Another is a configuration of sexual behavior which varied from the norms of white society but was nonetheless coherent and subject to the group's own rules. (A girl might have intercourse fairly early and bear a child, but then she was generally expected to settle down with one man and have the rest of her children by him.) Another clear pattern involved the giving and taking of names. Boys were frequently named after their fathers, but girls seldom after their mothers (fatherhood did count for something), and when surnames were assumed, they were—perhaps oftener than not—taken from former owners rather than from current ones. Among the devices for absorbing the shocks of sale and separation, and for socializing newcomers, was that of adoption and "fictive kin." All told, the slave family system had a dynamic of its own which Gutman believes was largely independent of planter control.

It is evident, on the other hand, that the polemical requirements of Gutman's argument have affected not simply the argument's tone (which is often hot and fierce) but its very shape, structure, and even outcome. It would have been one thing to say that the black family, exposed to the debilitating rigors of slavery, in reality had access to a series of stabilizing mechanisms. Such a formulation would allow for its own reversibility, a margin essential to any experimental proposition. But it is quite another simply to make, as he does, the untestable claim that he has shown the black family emerging from slavery with a very high degree of stability, far greater than his predecessors have been willing to grant. The slave family, so the logic goes, was much more stable than we thought. But what if we had not thought anything? How in that case might a study on this subject have begun, and how might it have turned out?

Gutman, reasonably enough in principle, criticizes everyone else for using a static model which does not provide for development over time. But his own model is equally static in a lateral way; it makes no operative provision for stress, disintegration, or damage of any kind, at any point in time. He makes verbal gestures toward the severities of the system, but no serious analytical ones. Of course nobody expects him to stress the severities, his concerns being elsewhere, but he has not even left spaces in his scheme for how they might have worked. Might he not try to predict a new study (the older ones are all obsolete; he says so himself) which would be just as thorough, just as learned, just as sophisticated as his own, but which examined the other side, the "damage" side of slave life for the slave family, just as he himself has done for the "resistance" side? We are not even sure now whether such a side existed.

Put in another way, the slave family is given no credible setting in which to function. Gutman is rightly enthusiastic about Charles A. Valentine's "bicultural model" for explaining the socialization of ethnic minorities, a process of interacting "mainstream" and "ethnic" influences. Well and good, but here the "mainstream" hardly appears, much less *does* anything, whereas Gutman's greatest fury is aroused by the most coherent "mainstream" argument now going—Eugene Genovese's assertions about the paternalistic ethos of the master class and the ways in which it influenced the slaves' own culture. Gutman flatly declares—probably wrongly and certainly unnecessarily—that there is no evidence for any such claims.

An analogy that comes to mind is the peculiar impression I once had in reading Irving Brant's version of James Madison's role in the nation's drift toward war in 1812. The biographer was determined to show Madison as far less the indecisive vacillator, tossed by events, "than we once thought," whereupon poor Madison begins to grow ever bigger and more resolute until all the powers of Europe, the entire setting—Napoleon, the Grand Army, Wellington, and the fleets and admirals of England—shrink into specks. In Gutman's pages the proportions of things—in themselves very good things—appear similarly warped. The family flourishes in slavery, and for all we know may even have been strengthened by it; the vitality of slave culture grows and grows; life under slavery looks better and better. And farther and farther into the distance recedes the planter class with its array of coercive powers—physical, psychological, and moral—as does a whole environing society with its vicious racism, determined in a thousand ways to render impotent and dependent the black presence in its midst. Gutman respectfully quotes me: "It was, after all, a very hard system, and we would do well not to forget it." But I fear he does forget it. His work is impressive; his case is potentially an excellent one. But it is made without a context.

THERE now seems to be a fair measure of agreement on the importance of the time dimension; others besides Gutman have

* The claim is plausibly supported by Philip Curtin's demonstration that American slavery, which depended no more than nominally on fresh imports, was—unlike slavery elsewhere—demographically successful. Curtin estimates that only about 4.5 per cent of slave imports from Africa to the New World were brought to the present United States, and concludes that the maintenance of the American slave population depended primarily on natural increase. *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1969).

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recognized that slavery had a history, and that its development and growth began a long time before the immediate antebellum era upon which our focus normally rests. Gerald W. Mullin's *Flight and Rebellion: Slave Resistance in Eighteenth Century Virginia* (1972) and Peter H. Wood's *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (1974) are two notable efforts to extend this historical perspective by examining the conditions of slavery in the 18th century. Resistance, as is implied in the titles, looms large in each. Each is admirable as a monographic undertaking; both have most of the merits of care, detail, and circumstance that such work at its disciplined best can embody. What they give us as building blocks for a general theory of American slavery, however, is somewhat less evident.

Wood shows that in early colonial South Carolina the combination of a numerical majority of blacks (two to one by 1740), special skills (Africans apparently knew more about rice culture than Europeans), great demand for labor of all kinds, and especially the loose and unsettled character of a frontier-plantation society, had by 1720 or 1730 provided the makings of a distinct Afro-American subculture, with Gullah as a kind of lingua franca. But growing signs of self-sufficiency among these lowland slaves became intolerable to the white minority. Efforts to hedge and limit the slave population generated tension and resistance, culminating in the Stono Rebellion of 1739 in which a band of fifty or more slaves killed about two dozen whites. The rebellion was brutally suppressed. The most rigorous legal features of the South Carolina slave system date from the comprehensive Negro Act of 1740—a direct consequence of the rebellion—which formed the core of the South Carolina slave code for the next hundred years.

The path to rebellion in Mullin's study, which ends with the Gabriel uprising of 1800, was different. In Virginia, it seems, it was not a climate of repression that produced rebellion, but something like its opposite: the setting of post-Revolutionary Virginia was permissive and ideologically rather open. The largest number of runaways during that period came not from the plantations but from a relatively mobile and highly valued class of slaves who had mastered a craft of some kind, spoke English fluently, and had become acclimated to European ways. It was from this group, moreover, that the leadership for Gabriel's Rebellion was drawn. Actually the uprising never took place, the conspirators having been detected before it could be carried into action. Here too the punishment was summary and swift.

These studies, terminating in the way each does, leave unresolved some important questions about culture. Is the passage of time bound to be "progressive," and are its effects in the way of cultural change always of a positive character? A rebellion and its consequences should present a potentially useful test of this—of the power of "ethnic" and "mainstream" cultures to assert themselves under stress—but if your examination *ends* with a rebellion you cannot very well run such a test, and your historical slice remains in its way as truncated as any other "static" model.

As for rebellions in themselves, there is the oft-mooted question of which kinds of slaves were likely to rebel more effectively, the African-born or the fully acculturated American-born. Mullin says the latter; Wood implies the former. Perhaps the question itself is misleading. The key variable in each instance seems to have been a certain modicum of social space, provided in the South Carolina case by a "critical mass" of shared African behavior, speech, and myth, and in Virginia by a situation that allowed a privileged group to evade the full coercions of plantation slavery. Did they—for whatever reasons—have as much space afterward? It seems not. Actually the entire problem of rebellion, not only in these works but in others as well, has become analytically rather blurred. I will come back to this point shortly.

IV

The most impressive of the new books that has yet appeared is Eugene Genovese's *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (1974). This comprehensive survey of all elements of the plantation system is a work of obvious distinction, fully entitled to the honors so far accorded it. To be sure, the theme that continually recurs in the critical commentary (for reasons not as clear as they might be) is that of the "flawed masterpiece." The flaws must be duly examined. But it is only fair to consider first why it should have been regarded as a masterpiece, and for this one finds a variety of grounds.

Genovese's book represents a prodigious effort to see slavery whole. "No aspect of the lives of the slaves escapes his scrutiny," as one reviewer has written; "nothing his lively intellect touches remains obscure." Great learning has been combined with meticulous research in the widest range of sources, and unlike any other recent writer, Genovese has an inclusive theory which tries to account in a humane way for both the planter's side and the slave's side of the system. For him the key concept is "paternalism." With this he reaffirms, as in his previous work, the power of the master class—but with a difference. The ethos of paternalism was accepted, each in its own way, by both sides. For the master, it was the moral sanction for the exploitation and ownership of other men's labor, as well as for defining them as socially inferior, in return for his assuming their care and protection. But for the slave it meant a recognition of his humanity and a set of strong claims upon the master, claims he was able to manipulate for the preservation of his own dignity. The slave accepted paternalism, but reluc-

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tantly and not without extracting terms. Though we may think what we please of the theory, the work as a whole is massively documented, and we can examine the evidence for ourselves.

Genovese takes up a variety of problems, often in a challenging and original way. There was, for instance, the difficult position of the black driver, which required a constant balancing of diametrically opposed interests. Or the role of the "mammy," one of great authority and even more complex, which he treats with a fine subtlety. As for resistance, there is careful discrimination between individual acts (sabotage, thievery, petty insubordination, and so on, which did not imply nonacceptance of the system itself) and concerted measures of rebellion, which were admittedly few. The consciousness of the slave community, Genovese believes, must be regarded as generally "prepolitical," even though he also thinks the idea of a "black nation" was already present. And finally, the very fullest attention is given to slave culture. There are appreciative discussions of speech patterns, folk-tales, conjuring, music, craftsmanship, and cooking. Many of Herbert Gutman's conclusions about slave family life, courtship, and sex mores have been anticipated—though of course in less depth—by Genovese. But that aspect of slave culture which receives the most extended and novel treatment is religion. Slave religion had neither a messianic tradition nor a concept of original sin, but its "life-affirming" quality served as "a weapon for personal and community survival." Christianity, as the slaves redefined it,

> lacked that terrible inner tension between the sense of guilt and the sense of mission which once provided the ideological dynamism for Western civilization's march to world power. But in return for this loss of revolutionary dynamism, the slaves developed an Afro-American and Christian humanism that affirmed joy in life in the face of every trial.

Roll, Jordon, Roll, with its magisterial proportions, may well come to occupy the authoritative position once held by Ulrich Phillips's *American Negro Slavery* and later by Kenneth Stampp's *The Peculiar Institution.* Nonetheless, virtually everyone commenting upon the book has had some fault to find with it.

It has been objected, for instance, that Genovese does not know as much about the South as he ought to, that black religion was never really very different from lower-class white fundamentalism, and that if Genovese had had to eat more of that greasy cooking himself he would not have rhapsodized so much about it. But more serious and puzzling difficulties have been raised by his solemn claims for the makings of black nationalism under slavery, and—in view of Genovese's own earlier writings—by his having gone overboard for black culture. David Donald finds this explainable only "as a consequence of the immense pressure, both direct and indirect, exerted these days upon white scholars who write about Afro-American history," and suggests that the language of *Roll, Jordan, Roll* was so fashioned "as to appease the most ardent black militant."* Blacks, on the other hand, have not been "appeased" at all. They appear to have little use for Genovese's central concept, paternalism, and judging from the doings at the recent conference of black scholars at Queens College, this has put them off everything else in the book. At best it seems that Genovese has written a book that nearly everyone can praise, but mostly for somebody else's purposes. It should be of great interest, according to one black reviewer, to those who "sit and theorize about somebody else's oppression and humanity."

But the most provocative of all the critiques has been that of the West Indian-born sociologist Orlando Patterson.† Conceding the work to be "brilliant" and "indispensable," Patterson nonetheless sees it as an "analytically disappointing study." He thinks Genovese has abandoned much of his early Marxism, keeping its memory alive only through a few "redundant" quotations from the Italian theoretician Antonio Gramsci. (Donald found the Gramsci references similarly "pretentious.") Unlike American blacks, Patterson agrees with Genovese that antebellum paternalism as "a mechanism of social control . . . succeeded astonishingly well in welding together all the elements of the system, especially masters and slaves." But he will have none of Genovese's insistence that the accommodation made by the slaves was one that preserved their dignity, and he too sees no basis in slave culture for the talk of black nationalism. Despite the expressive component of that culture, it was "singularly lacking in range, flexibility, and dynamic adaptability," and represented "a total adjustment to the demands of plantation life." The slaves who pass through Genovese's pages Patterson finds "as a class, morally degraded and utterly wanting in their capacity to resist, even when the system was crumbling around them." In other words, Patterson, rather like a young Israeli tank sergeant of a decade ago commenting on the Holocaust, is demanding to know why they capitulated, why they were not more heroic.

WHAT does one make of all this? For one thing, I believe the abused Gramsci is more central to Genovese's overall scheme than he is generally given credit for being. Gramsci's thought provides Genovese with a way of bringing the slave fully into the equation without repudiating his earlier convictions either about the planter class's hegemony over Southern society at large or about the master's patriarchal role vis-à-vis his black dependents.

* COMMENTARY, January 1975.
† *New Republic,* November 9, 1974, pp. 37-38.

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Genovese theoretically had two choices as he prepared to write this book. He might have emphasized the deadening effects of paternalism on the slave population, which Patterson thinks he should have done. He chose instead, like a number of others, to put his emphasis on the positive aspects of slave life and culture. Moreover, Gramsci's thesis on the "man of the masses" whose struggle to transform the future is also a struggle for understanding between two opposing modes of consciousness within himself—one urging him forward, the other binding him to the past and inducing political passivity—allows Genovese both to keep his paternalism and to postulate a "pre-political" slave community that retains its moral integrity. Gramsci the gradualist insists on seeing things over the very long run, and will have no wasteful revolutionary posturing before the mass consciousness—morally, intellectually, politically—is good and ready for it. Under the Gramscian rubric even a "black nation" may be projected, however little the contemporary evidence might seem to warrant it.

But does it all make for a real balance? Has Genovese achieved a convincing synthesis of masters' and slaves' world views—do the two sides of the model have a true organic relation, can they really be made to fit? I fear that Gramsci is, after all, just a bit too good to be true. Gramscian theory, not needed at all in Genovese's *The Political Economy of Slavery*, functions here principally to justify the integrity of slave culture. But whereas it may apply admirably to the depressed classes of post-1918 southern Italy, it makes little allowance for immediate damage in a setting where some men not only exploit other men but deprive them of liberty itself, and keep them so deprived by force.

For Genovese, the workings of the American slave system somehow avoid corrupting either side. There is little room in his paternalism for *contempt*—self-contempt, or contempt for the other—as any built-in aspect of the total equation. He continues to deny, for example, that the planters as a class were afflicted with guilt, that there was ever a real failure of self-assurance, or that a hateful corrosive racism was ever a primary element of their mentality. They may have been genuinely shocked at the slaves' "ingratitude" in wartime, but that need hardly be inconsistent with chronic self-deception or a basic sense of insecurity, or with guilt. Nor is there much room for self-contempt on the slave's part either, be it over his color or over his own powerlessness. Genovese claims, with no proof at all, that color envy was a product not of slavery but of post-emancipation times; and of the "slavish personality" he once made so much of, there remains scarcely a trace. Thus there is a strong sense here of having it both ways: paternalism, for all the qualifications and disclaimers, comes out on both sides as essentially positive in character. Few other aspects of it are allowed to show anywhere in *Roll, Jordan, Roll.*

A final problem concerns resistance. It is the question of just how much Genovese has done—any more than Mullin or Wood has done—either to advance a theory of rebellion or to predict one (although Genovese says he plans to go into this in a subsequent book). On the one hand, I think Orlando Patterson's demands for a heroic tradition—or rather, his implication that the lack of one is a sign of moral failure—are inhumane and unreasonable. But on the other, Genovese's long-view Gramscian conjurations take less than serious account of immediate circumstances: the immense coercive powers at the master's command, the savage vengeance wreaked on the few insurrectionary gestures that were made, or the fact that those who did make such attempts were men who had escaped the full dead weight of plantation paternalism. Genovese is to be taxed not for a failure to recognize these factors (he does in his way recognize them), nor even for extenuating the thinness of the slaves' revolutionary tradition (which he does at some length), but simply for his supposing that such a "tradition" (long-term or short-term) was even thinkable.

Indeed, viewing the slaves' own culture with greater discrimination, and being less seduced by the idea of a "black nation," might have disclosed how essentially conservative it was. ("Pre-political" is surely the understatement of the century.) It might have shown some of that culture's most positive mechanisms—religion probably, the family almost certainly—functioning in a profoundly moderating way. One does not need to multiply entities—say, with pre-political contradictory consciousness—to see, for example, that men with families close at hand are those least likely to go on revolutionary rampages, especially under a standing threat of sale and separation. As for Patterson's wondering why there were no revolts even when the system was crumbling, for thousands there was no reason why they should want to revolt. They could simply pick up and leave. And the potential leadership, if any, for such revolts would have been the first to go. In short, every major force in the system—positive *and* negative—worked to discourage rebellion, and assumptions to the contrary by any modern writer will make heavy—even cruel—demands on the evidence.

V

For the slavery audience, the sensation of the 1974 publishing season was, of course, *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery*, by Robert W. Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman. There has since been some speculation as to why such an extraordinary amount of attention was bestowed upon the authors' novel message of a thriving, dynamic institution from which everyone benefited. Pure incredulity may well have been the main explana-

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tion for it. But in any case the glow did not last very long. Few books on slavery or any other historical subject have made more sweeping claims. Few have shot so high and fallen so far, so fast.

The message *was* sensational, supported as it seemed to be by the full resources of "cliometrics" or quantitative history—computers, statistical formulas, an army of research assistants, and a third of a million dollars in foundation money—all being brought to bear on the subject for the first time. Southern slave agriculture, Fogel and Engerman announced, was "35 per cent more efficient than the Northern system of family farming," and the typical slave field hand was by and large "harder working and more efficient than his white counterpart." Most slave-owners encouraged stable families, seldom sold slaves, provided food and housing as good as what was available to the average Northern white worker and probably better. Whippings were not as frequent as zealots have claimed; slaves tended not to be sexually promiscuous—like the whites, they were "Victorian" and even "prudish," the women especially; at least 25 per cent of the male slaves occupied "managerial" positions or were skilled workers; and the average slave in effect retained about 90 per cent of the earnings of his labor.

The masters thus emerge not as cruel exploiters but as shrewd entrepreneurs who used a variety of incentives to fashion a crack labor force, achievement oriented, with a snug family life and a set of positive attitudes—a sort of "Protestant ethic"—toward work. It is a grievous libel, Fogel and Engerman sternly explained, to picture the blacks as having been so victimized and repressed by slavery that they could do nothing constructive with their lives. The authors' desire was "to strike down the view that black Americans were without culture, without achievement, and without development for their first two hundred and fifty years on American soil."

Fogel was not at all unwilling to talk about his and Engerman's work. (It will be more convenient henceforth to refer mainly to Fogel, since he has given more than the usual indications of his role as senior author, having made the key tactical decisions, given all the interviews, and posed for all the pictures.) He and his coadjutor had not at first dreamed of writing such a book, or suspected such results. But his duty as a disinterested scientist required him to follow the evidence wherever it led, come what might.

THE scene opens in 1967. The two, as Fogel tells it, had just completed a modest little paper about what the cliometricians (themselves included) had contributed and might further contribute to such marginal questions as growth of per-capita income in the antebellum South and the profitability of investment in slaves. They had not presumed to encroach upon the concerns of such "mainstream historians" as Stampp, Elkins, and Genovese by involving themselves in issues like the black family or the psychological impact of slavery upon the slaves. This was because they "did not want to mire quantitative work in the marshlands of ideological dispute."* But the following year—still content to pursue their self-effacing researches unmired in ideology or other qualitative encumbrances—they ran an experiment on agricultural efficiency. It took them aback: "Southern agriculture was 9 per cent more efficient than free Northern agriculture—an absurd result."

Something was wrong. They must adjust their procedures, "recalibrate their inputs," and try again. "To our surprise, the adjustment went in the wrong direction: the relative advantage of slave agriculture *rose* from 9 to 39 per cent." Now they were really jolted. How could slavery, "deeply immoral and politically backward," produce such an outcome? "How could a system so impoverished in labor skills be efficient?" That would mean Stampp, Elkins, and Genovese would all have to be mistaken. The result "did not sit well with us." "Our instincts continued to resist the implications of our findings." But after much struggle with their resisting instincts, they simply had to recognize that "the time was at hand for a fundamental reinterpretation of the nature of the slave economy."

Farewell to the quiet life. They would wind up the other study they were doing (on the American iron industry), put safe and harmless things behind them, and square away. One startling discovery led to another, and this created a new crisis. By early 1971 it was obvious that their emerging reinterpretation was becoming so fundamental that they could no longer think of confining it to a scholarly monograph. It must be given to the general public, and it could not wait for the completion of all phases of their exhaustive research. To be sure, there were professional risks in undertaking a popular work. But what might happen if they left the interpretation of their discoveries to others? Though the work was technically sound, it might be "twisted into an apologia for slavery rather than used to demolish the myth of black incompetence." No, said Fogel; whatever the consequences, this must not happen. And besides:

> How often are scholars presented with an opportunity to cut a gordian knot as massive, as urgent, and as deeply intertwined in the moral trauma of a nation as the racial issues that have tormented America for most of its history?

* R.W. Fogel, "From the Marxists to the Mormons," *Times Literary Supplement*, June 13, 1975. The date is misleading; the article was written roughly a year before, and the expansive mood reflects the period immediately following the book's publication. See also the interview by François Furet and Emmanuel LeRoy Ladurie, *"A qui profitait l'esclavage?,"* in *Le Nouvel Observateur*, September 9, 1974, pp. 72-80. Fogel's sayings read particularly well in French.

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How often, indeed? They had no choice; they must grasp the opportunity. They must press on.

They did, and *Time on the Cross* duly made its appearance in the spring of 1974 amid a blaze of publicity arranged by Little, Brown ("with Professor Fogel's acquiescence," according to the New York *Times*). For several months all seemed to go splendidly. The book was written up in all the leading periodicals, and it stirred up no end of excitement. Fogel himself attracted much interest in his transatlantic comings and goings that summer. Special sessions on the book were scheduled for historical meetings in the forthcoming season.

And yet by fall, the horizon was already beginning to darken. The thunderclouds were very noticeable by late October. By the end of the year, the deluge.

THE blacks, from the beginning, never appreciated the special Fogel-Engerman version of their ancestors' "achievement," implying as it did a willing acceptance of slavery and the entire system of white values. "What's the use of discussing all the alleged benefits," demanded Kenneth Clark. "Would the authors recommend a return to slavery?" After this benign account of slavery, according to a reviewer in *Phylon*, whites would be able to claim that "the best explanation for the [subsequent] failure of blacks to 'progress' in American society is not . . . racism and its consequences, but their own ineptitude." "Fogel and Engerman," jeered Brenda Jones in *Freedomways*, "would cut the last rope restraining the racist hordes: *Come out, come out, wherever you are! You have no reason to denounce your slaveholding ancestors—they did nothing wrong. You have spent too much time on the cross!*"

Meanwhile, scholars everywhere were beginning to sniff with suspicion. There were no clear lines among them; it was not a matter of resistance to cliometrics, or of "conservatives" versus "radicals," or of "humanists" against quantifiers. If anything, the vanguard was led by Fogel's fellow cliometricians challenging him on his own grounds. But perhaps the most accurate picture would be that of historians and economists of all persuasions descending on Fogel at once. By the time they were through, they had rendered doubtful the procedures by which every one of the book's major assertions had been reached. A few examples may suggest the extent of the wreckage.

For the superior "efficiency" of Southern agriculture, the index the authors used was based not on volume of cotton per slavehand but on prices received for the product, which meant it could measure little more than profitability, a very different thing from efficiency. It gave no warrant for qualitative conclusions about "diligent and efficient workers," "imbued like their masters with a Protestant ethic"; the worldwide demand for cotton, and returns on investment under near-monopoly conditions, were such that Southern cotton growth could have looked "efficient" even with slovenly work habits, a refractory labor force, and an irrational mode of production. Then there was Fogel's claim that "the houses of slaves compared well with the housing of free workers." A check on his and Engerman's own sources for the typical size of slave cabins revealed they had exaggerated it by about 50 per cent, while the "comparison" was with tenements of the poor in the most wretched slums of New York, Chicago, and Baltimore at the depth of the 1893 depression—and at that, they had only counted the bedrooms. As for the slaves' sexual habits, "not promiscuous but prudish," all that this rested upon was an inference from the probate records that the average age of slave mothers at the birth of a first child was 22.5. But this was not what the records showed at all. They showed date of birth of the first *surviving* child; in a period of high infant mortality and separation of mothers from children, the true age would have been closer to 18. Perhaps the most remarkable assertion of all was that 79 per cent of all overseers were slaves. (This was part of the authors' general contention that 25 per cent of the slaves were either "managers" or skilled artisans.) Though they could not give a single real-life example, they reasoned that if a white overseer was not listed in the census for a given plantation, there must still have been an overseer, and he must have been black. They seem not to have known that a resident overseer was not listed in the returns at all unless he lived in the master's house (an irregular arrangement), or that innumerable plantations were managed by the owner himself or one of his sons, or that thousands of whites who gave their occupation as "overseer" would according to the Fogel-Engerman logic have been unemployed. The fact was that a slave overseer in the antebellum South was almost as rare as a black slaveowner.*

There were any number of lesser items as well. The only source for the authors' contention about infrequent punishments was the published diary

* The body of criticism is already prodigious, and I have drawn only upon its highlights for these paragraphs. The principal items are Thomas L. Haskell, "Were Slaves More Efficient? Some Doubts About 'Time on the Cross,'" *New York Review of Books*, September 19, 1974, and "The True & Tragical History of 'Time on the Cross,'" *ibid.*, October 2, 1975 (Haskell was the first to throw doubts on the "efficiency" thesis); Herbert G. Gutman, *Slavery and the Numbers Game: A Critique of "Time on the Cross"* (Illinois, 1975), especially on punishments, sales, the family, etc.; Gary M. Walton, ed., "A Symposium on 'Time on the Cross,'" *Explorations in Economic History*, Fall 1975, especially the paper by Richard Sutch, who discovered the fallacy on housing; Eric Foner, "Redefining the Past," *Labor History*, Winter 1975, pp. 127-138, which makes the striking point about the extent to which Fogel and Engerman have relied on non-quantitative sources; and Paul David and Peter Temin, "Slavery: The Progressive Institution?" *Journal of Economic History*, September 1974, pp. 739-783, and "Capitalist Masters, Bourgeois Slaves," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Winter 1975, pp. 445-457.

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of the Louisiana planter Bennet Barrow, and from it they calculated that the average was "0.7 whippings per hand per year." But they inflated the numbers of slaves on the plantation, which brought down the average; other information in the diary on frequency of whipping was not counted, which brought it down still more; Barrow was in fact a brutal master, and some of his punishments were monstrous. None of this was mentioned. Even by their own figures, somebody was whipped every four days on the Barrow plantation, which undoubtedly served as a strong incentive to hard work, a Protestant ethic, and so forth. Another misrepresentation was in the number of slaves sold, "only" 1.92 per cent of them each year. The same figures meant that any slave over a thirty-five-year lifetime had a 50-50 chance of being sold himself and witnessing the sale of at least 11 members of his immediate family. Or the claim that "more than 84 per cent of all sales over the age of fourteen involved unmarried individuals." They got this by taking a limited sample from the New Orleans slave market, assuming that the traders "strongly preferred unmarried women," then further assuming that such a "preference" carried over to men. And finally, a surprisingly large proportion of the "evidence" was not quantitative at all but came from traditional narrative sources. These too were garbled, otherwise they could not have yielded such strange assertions as that abolitionists and pro-slavery apologists were equally "racist," or that Southern planters on the eve of the Civil War were "optimistic" about the future of slavery, or that the planter class after emancipation "no longer existed."

How could it all have happened? It is certainly a fascinating phenomenon in the psychology of desire—in seeing most sharply those aspects of "the truth" that one most wants to see, and managing somehow to overlook the rest. Many have mused over this, and wondered how Fogel could have so hypnotized himself or not have anticipated the consequences. However that may be, there are at least two elements of the case that seem worth noting. The primary thing seems to have been a total commitment to the "efficiency" thesis: this *had* to be correct, no matter what objections other econometricians might make, and Fogel as much as said so after three days of bombardment at Rochester.* Why? Because the superior efficiency of antebellum plantation agriculture had been his and Engerman's great discovery: this was the magic formula that promised to transform an essentially peripheral question—that of profitability—into one involving the entire character of slavery itself. It was from this that all the rest followed, and this was what made the other difficulty.

Fogel, it seems, was at some point seized with an imperial vision. The "culture" argument had come to dominate the discourse by the time his book was being planned; the impulse to absorb it into a grand synthesis which would in effect preempt the entire field was irresistible. He would simply reshape the argument in accordance with his primary claim, even though he presented no evidence whatever as to what this "culture" amounted to—values, beliefs, lore, or anything else. He would somehow redefine culture as a kind of occupational "achievement," no matter how grotesque the result might look. As for his predecessors, he would lump them all together into one indiscriminate category—"traditional historians"—and dismiss their work as having been mostly built on "racist" premises. He was determined, it appears, to have the argument all to himself.

So the convergence of everyone—scholars of every type—upon *Time on the Cross* was, after all, logical enough. They moved as they did not only because their own findings and procedures were threatened with disrepute (those of other cliometricians most of all), but also because they thought they saw the whole grand subject being brought into ridicule. The episode may nevertheless have had some salutary by-products. It may have brought us to a fruitful turning point, and furnished a precipitant of sorts for rethinking the entire argument over American black slavery.

VI

Ralph Ellison, judging from what others have published over the past few years, has clearly carried his point on black culture. But it seems equally clear that the culture argument is at something of a crossroads. Much of what Ellison once called for still eludes those pursuing it, especially that aspect which concerns blacks under slavery. Slavery is not the most typical context in which one explores such an entity as culture; the initial search for "resistance" may have propelled us farther into that area than we bargained for. The pursuit of culture is important but, as we have already seen, it is full of logical traps.

Any group that has been dispossessed of liberty by another group and subjected to daily assaults on its dignity, on the personalities of its members, and on their very physical being, is by the primal laws of life going to do something to protect itself. It brings to bear whatever individual and communal resources it has in order to make its condition tolerable; it develops patterns of response; it fashions a body of lore and a picture of itself that makes its own existence in some way comprehensible, predictable, and bearable. The product —as with any other people seeking collectively to make sense out of the world—is "culture."

But it does not follow that simply in locating

* I am referring here to the conference of scholars convened at Rochester, October 24-26, 1974 for the sole purpose of discussing *Time on the Cross*. See Haskell, "The True & Tragical History of 'Time on the Cross.'"

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culture we have automatically found something *ipso facto* positive, in and of itself. No theory of culture I know of claims that much, though the point is by no means clear in much of the recent discussion of American black slavery. Culture, under such conditions as those of slavery, is not acquired without a price; the social and individual experience of any group with as little power, and enduring such insistent assaults (of cruelty, contempt, and, not least, uncertainty), is bound to contain more than the normal residue of pathology. Any theory that is worth anything must allow for this. It must allow, that is, for damage.

So there are two distinct arguments, equally worth pursuing, one on damage, the other on resistance and culture. This ought to have been obvious all along. But it has never been entirely obvious, either in the 1950's and early 60's when damage was the dominant concern, or later when the culture argument came to eclipse the one on damage. This state of things will surely no longer do. Each argument is in fact relatively undeveloped; there is much to be done on both.

One way to proceed would be simply to acknowledge this distinctness, and to pursue the two lines separately. It may be the same street, but the traffic goes in opposite directions, and in the present case it would seem exceedingly difficult for anyone to work both sides at once. Just to recognize this would in itself be an advance of sorts, though in practice it would go further than that. Though a useful discussion of culture need not devote inordinate attention to damage, it must still leave *spaces* in its theoretical structure—not mere verbal concessions and "exceptions," but a formal allowance—for damage and its workings, and the same would hold in reverse for those on the other side of the street.

And yet in the last analysis the two arguments on slavery cannot really be separate, and when ideological tensions eventually loosen, the two must and will meet. But how will we know when the time is at hand? We will know this when, for one thing, it can be shown without inhibitions just how the "mainstream" and "ethnic" cultures did interact, bearing in mind where the power lay, and exactly how it was exerted and responded to. And for another, we will know it when we are able to make discriminations *within* culture, and to see some cultural responses as more positive and creative than others.*

Then there is a final point, when it is a question of exploring the depth and variety of American black culture. Too much of the culture argument has been confined so far—artificially, it seems to me—to the era of slavery. Only by breaking out of such confinement, and carrying the argument forward, will we find it possible to test the development of culture over time and under varying conditions. Only thus, moreover, can we re-test a proposition which until recently nobody thought needed demonstrating. It is the conviction that freedom is better, after all, than slavery—however much "freedom" may have been hedged about in the century after emancipation—for the growth of culture, or anything else that humankind most values.

* One of a number of possible examples of such discrimination comes to mind. It is now some time since I made my own initial statement on this subject. I have been told by well-wishers and critics alike that I really ought to have done something with Erik Erikson and his work on ego-psychology. This is a very sound point, and if I were writing *Slavery* over again I probably would. My argument on personality, thus enriched and modified, might then go somewhat as follows. The natural tendency of human beings anywhere, according to Erikson, is to move toward adulthood tentatively, even reluctantly. One of the normal functions of culture (through rites of passage and so on) is to encourage the process, to quicken and even to force it. Some cultural contexts are more efficient in doing this than others; some, conceivably, might even hold the process back. The cultural setting of the antebellum slave plantation might well be examined with this problem in mind.

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Our Contemporary, William James

William Barrett

WHAT strikes us in reading William James now is at once how distant and yet how close to us he is. Some of his most famous essays, particularly on determinism and freedom of the will, were written almost a century ago. Their philosophic idiom is not our current one, and they speak out of a different historical and human ambience from ours. In point of actual chronology he can be squeezed into our century only in its first decade, though in those years he did produce some of his most decisive philosophical statements. Yet he belongs to our time, he is our contemporary in the 20th century, for deeper reasons than this narrow and literal-minded appeal to chronology can show. He speaks to us now, I believe, more forcefully than at any time since his death in 1910.

Even the great differences in the intellectual and spiritual milieu from which he wrote, and which at this distance we can discern more clearly, have a more immediate meaning and use for us now. By contrast they help to reveal what our own very different situation is. In America in the latter part of the 19th century, and certainly in New England, God was very far from dead. The new tremors of agnosticism were stirring, of course, like the advance waves of an earthquake. Scientific materialism seemed by this time to be incorporated into the body of physics itself; and the shock of the theory of evolution altered not only our picture of the origin of mankind but also our perspective on its possible destiny. But these matters disturbed the intellectuals mostly. The faithful, if troubled at all, were quick and ingenious with the responses of their will to believe. New England and Boston particularly buzzed with their varied circles of spirituality and spiritualism.

We get some sense of part of this background against which William James philosophized from his brother Henry's novel, *The Bostonians*. We get here too a lively sense of the difference between the two brothers. Henry is the adopted European, the artist, and the aristocrat; and he takes consequently a very negative view of the spiritual seething in and around Boston. He finds the people engaged in it mostly shabby and seedy—"The great irregular army of nostrum-mongers, domiciled in humanitary Bohemia." It was *The Bostonians* which gave Henry James the most trouble with his audience; and, significantly, for readers today it is one of the novels most favored in the whole Jamesian canon. It seems to us one of the most prophetic and "modernist" in spirit. It gave Henry James trouble in other ways, too, besides its public reception, so that he did not rewrite it to be incorporated in the later New York edition. For us that is also one of its attractions; it seems to us more pungent in the earlier style, and therefore more modern too in its spirit of dissent.

William was inclined to be more democratically tolerant of all these odd manifestations of the human spirit. Where there was moral earnestness abroad one should appreciate it no matter what peculiar expression it might take. Besides, all these dealings in the occult aroused his curiosity as a psychologist. Nor was the time spent in such study wasted to him, for he carried away from it his lifelong sensitivity to the hidden and subliminal sources of the human mind that gives him a breadth and profundity that more cerebral philosophers lack. But most of all there was in the atmosphere a general will to believe, and this he could appeal to and mobilize. Liberal religion was then at the height of its vogue. Confident in itself and its virtues, it enjoyed the best of both worlds. It had assimilated the Enlightenment, banished superstition, yet still seemed to preserve the religious values that were worthwhile. By contrast, how different our own period emerges. Faith or the lack of faith seems hardly a live option anymore—at least among intellectuals. To raise the religious question in certain circles would be an embarrassing *gaucherie*. And so far as the public at large is concerned, there prevails alternately a flaccidity or frenzy of the will; apathy or violence; cynicism or a ranting fanaticism over the momentary ideology. Nihilism has become the matter-of-fact state of mind of our period. And as happens when a state of mind becomes so pervading, it becomes for the most part unconscious of itself.

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Yet James speaks to us over all these differences of time and circumstance, and it is a mark of both his genius and his unique intellectual power that he is able to do so. It is important for us now, in the midst of what might be called a James revival, that we be under no misunderstandings as heretofore on the quality of mind that makes up this power.

Part of his genius, which even his detractors have admitted, was his remarkable sensitivity to the actualities of life. It took quite an unusual eye to pick up from the newspapers of his day the kind of odd and sensational cases that he sometimes used to press home his point. He was able too to comb through some of the most bathetic literature of religious conversion to come up with some unforgettable if rough-cut gems of the human soul speaking *in extremis*. "That adorable genius, William James," Whitehead says of him, having in mind this captivating and lively sense of the actual, and particularly James's grasp of feeling as the central fact for any human life. And it was from him that Whitehead borrowed the phrase "concreteness and adequacy" as the goal toward which philosophic thinking should strive. But once this gift for the actual—this capacity for concreteness and adequacy—is acknowledged, disparagement is likely to set in among some critics, though Whitehead is emphatically not of their number. James is considered to be woolly-minded, intellectually impressionistic, too subjective and emotional in his approach to qualify as a really rigorous thinker.

This was a prevalent attitude during the decades when Bertrand Russell and Russellian logic dominated philosophy. Russell himself, as one of the sharpest critics of pragmatism, has helped propagate a general disdain for what appeared to be its sloppy thinking generally. In retrospect, there is one very large irony in Russell's being associated with this disparagement, since at one point in his career, when he sought desperately to get beyond the Cartesian impasse with its split between mind and matter, he had to turn back to some suggestion about the nature of consciousness that James had advanced twenty years earlier. The supposedly impressionistic thinker was here supplying the logician with his intellectual capital.

Two changes in the philosophical climate during recent decades combine to alter this disparaging judgment of James. The first is the widespread influence of Ludwig Wittgenstein's later thought, which considerably undermines the imperial claims of Russellian logic. Wittgenstein in fact pursues a fundamentally pragmatic analysis of language to far more drastic lengths than any of the pragmatists. Logic is no longer the pre-existing and procrustean framework into which the activities of discourse have to be fit. The forms of logic are eventual; they come out of our use of language and the decisions that we have to make in the course of that use. The logician and mathematician must perpetually stand open to the possibility that he will come to a point where he will have to ask: Now what decision must I make so that such and such an undesirable situation will not arise in the way I use my symbols? Where a language has interesting things to say, precision is never perfect. The second change in intellectual climate has been the advent of existentialism as the major movement of contemporary thought. In the wake of the existentialist thinkers we are much less disposed to find fault with James for philosophizing in a personal and emotional mode. If philosophy is to say something that matters to us, it will have to touch upon that personal core of experience which after all is the center of being for all of us. And whatever else existentialism may have contributed by this time, I think it has at least succeeded in establishing some major revaluations in our judgments of past reputations: Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, for example, who philosophized in a most personal and passionate mode, now loom as two of the most powerful minds of the 19th century. We are less likely therefore to condemn William James out of hand for his personal style.

The fact is that he is at the very farthest remove from being woolly-minded. He is not a raconteur of cases, not an artist or novelist manqué, but a thinker of very great force. He wrote in a vivid and often colloquial style, and in trying to communicate to a wide audience sometimes affected a popular jauntiness of expression. Only a pedant or prig would be put off by these qualities. What matters is the intellectual power that lies behind or within this direct and vigorous appropriation of the vernacular. James has the great power of going for the gut issue in any question. Rarely if ever does he get lost in the aimless byways that often capture other philosophers. Half of the business of thinking is to know what one is after in the first place. A question may fascinate us as an intellectual puzzle that we can play with for our own amusement; but when it becomes a real problem it presses us toward some decision. And what we ask of a thinker is that he sift through the great mass of incidental and obscuring details in order to lay bare the main structure within which the decision has to be made.

Nowhere does James show this power more effectively than in his treatment of the problem of freedom.

II

I REMEMBER my disappointment as a young student years ago when I first read the classic essay, "The Dilemma of Determinism." The title led me to expect some objective and logical refutation that would once and for all impale the determinist on its prongs and leave him squirming there forever. I expected, I think, some new and surprising facts or some new logical relation of the facts that would finally settle the ques-

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tion in favor of freedom. Instead, James seemed to hurry past the objective question in order to get to the moral issues involved, and I was disappointed to find the bulk of the essay, as it seemed to me then, a moral appeal to the reader. For the dilemma of the determinist, as James presents it, is essentially a moral and not a metaphysical one. The objective question between freedom and determinism was thus left open and inconclusive as it had always been, and my young mind still felt dreadfully unsettled.

But of course this is where the question has to be left, and James is entirely right to hew to the line that he does. In this matter he is following the position of Kant a century before him. The firebreathers of determinism, like B.F. Skinner, who enter the dialectical fray convinced that they have seen the proof of determinism in their laboratory results last week, are greatly mistaken. The case for or against free will still stands where Kant left it. We have introduced all kinds of changes and refinements in terminology, but the objective merits of the case remain unaltered. Anything like a decisive proof for free will or determinism is unavailable. And where the matter is thus logically inconclusive, practical concerns enter. It makes a great deal of difference, practically speaking, if we do believe in freedom. We are more likely to improve our character if we believe that the power to do so lies in the exertion of our will. Determinism, if really followed in practice, would tend to close off the will toward such striving. Thus it is to our practical advantage to believe that we are free beings, and our subjective decision in the matter does have objective consequences in our life. Faith in freedom produces future facts that confirm it—at least in its practical efficacy if not its ultimate metaphysical truth.

Freedom on such terms would seem to be a bald practical transaction, a cool *quid pro quo*. But what we have in the above summation is half, and less than half, of the Jamesian position. For if the belief in freedom is a moral choice on our part, it is ultimately for James also a religious act. Our moral life in the end makes sense only as an affirmation of some religious attitude toward the universe. Many of his pragmatist followers have sought to dilute this position; but it is nonetheless James's, persistently though sometimes waveringly held throughout the body of his writings. To disengage this view, and present it more sharply, is the main burden of what we have to say in this essay.

Still, there may be some rumblings of the old controversy over determinism that have to be dealt with. The reader may wonder whether there are new facts that enter the picture which would cause us to reassess the objective merits of the case for or against determinism. Has science, which changes so rapidly in our time, not brought forth new discoveries which would bring us some conclusive decision one way or the other? The trouble is that the voices of the scientists, when they speak apart from their special fields, are likely to be part of the disunified clamor of our period. The public pronouncements of some of our physicists sound at times like dithyrambs for a universe of such indeterminacy and utter chaos that often after reading them we wonder how the ordinary world can possibly go about its way even as uniformly as it does. The psychologists, on the other hand, fresh from some new conditioning experiment, are eager to tell us how they have the techniques to engraft an iron-bound necessity upon our behavior. Clearly, we get no unanimity of illumination from science. In view of the perennial and shifting area of debate between philosophy and science, it may be worthwhile to ask why on this particular question matters must stand inconclusive; and for this purpose we may pause to take a brief look at the logical structure of the old controversy.

WHAT is it that the determinist really claims? However he may put it, his claim must be a total one. The British philosopher C.D. Broad gives us a succinct and accurate formulation as follows:

> What determinism asserts is that given the totality of all antecedent conditions in the universe that lead to the present occasion (in which we are to choose or act), one and only one future can follow.

The distinction between soft and hard determinism, already familiar to James, does not mitigate the totality of these claims. The soft determinist seems to sugar-coat the bitter pill of fatalism by telling us that our own desires and choices are among the conditions of our act, and that we therefore play a part in shaping our fate. There need not then be any strict antithesis between freedom and determinism. That we may be autonomous and free individuals is perfectly consistent with a strict causal determinism.

But this promise of respite is only an illusion. The soft determinist might be more aptly called the lucky determinist. If we are lucky, our desires and choices fit fluently and smoothly into the web of our life, and we act with all the harmonious appurtenances of freedom. We do what we want, and we are satisfied with the kinds of things we want. But for the unlucky man cursed with odious and self-destructive desires, there is not the least bit of solace here. Tell him that his own will is part of the conditions of his act and you leave him still groaning in travail. His own desires may be the most monstrous obstacle in his path against which he struggles to no avail. What formed these desires? Previous conditions in the chain of events. We are led backward to the youth that ruined manhood, to the childhood that blighted youth; to the role of parents, society, the historical situation into which he was born. The total claims of

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determinism begin to reassert themselves. If a man's will has been blighted from the start, and confirmed by circumstances bit by bit into its monstrous obsessions, you have not given him one bit of freedom by naming that will among the conditions that spin out his fate. Unless there is a break somewhere in the deterministic chain, you have not made him master of his own destiny but simply labeled him as the helpless instrument of his own doom. From the strictly logical point of view, there is only one determinism, and that is the position of hard determinism.

We come back thus to the simple and sweeping thesis that the determinist must strictly insist upon: given the totality of all conditions that make up the present state of the world, one and only one future can issue therefrom.

This is, admittedly, an extraordinary proposition, and we would do well to pause for a moment to contemplate it. Is it an analytic statement, like the propositions of logic, or an empirical hypothesis about matters of fact?

Clearly, it is not analytic. One can imagine that the route of the universe could be just what it is up to the present, and two or indeed many more different futures could follow from that past. There is at least no logical contradiction involved in conceiving alternative futures. And in the case of a truly analytic proposition, its denial leads us forthwith to a self-contradiction.

The thesis of determinism must then be an empirical proposition. And indeed it does appear to talk about events, human acts, and the condition of the world generally. But if it is an empirical statement about matters of fact, it has to be accounted a very strange one. No scientific hypothesis is ever put so sweepingly. A legitimate hypothesis for science is a restricted form that enables us to specify the conditions or the definite observations under which it could be proved false. But the determinist thesis—and this, I think, is its most significant peculiarity—is not a proposition which is ever falsifiable. Whatever cases one may try to present against it, the determinist can always respond that we do not know the antecedent circumstances in their totality. I say to the determinist, "Look, I choose to raise my arm and now I shall proceed to do it." I then raise my arm and ask, "Why isn't that a free act?" I only elicit a tolerant smile from him, for I have been silly: if I really knew all the conditions—absolutely all—that led to my words and my act, then it would be clear that at just that particular moment in the evolution of the cosmos I was fated to say and do just what I did.

Of course, neither he nor I can ever know all these conditions. The determinist has secured an unassailable position for himself at the expense of making it empty. I say that I believe in freedom, and that this belief makes a difference in my experience; for I then have greater faith that I can make an effort, and I therefore struggle harder than I would were I without this belief. The determinist smiles again, and remarks that it was fated in the course of things that I should believe in freedom. Whatever we try to point out in the foreground of experience, the determinist can always evade by taking recourse to what lies—or must lie—behind the scenes.

And so the dialectical game can be played back and forth as endless as it is inconclusive.

Yet surely there is more substance than this to the dispute between free will and determinism. A controversy that has drawn the energies and anguish of so many great intellects over the centuries cannot be reduced to a mere idle dialectical joust. Nor is it simply to be assigned to the past, for it is vigorously alive and troubling today. It lies behind the latest and boldest programs of behaviorists for reshaping human nature. And the same old question of freedom and necessity, though it remains unanswered, is lived through in the tortuous transactions day by day between psychoanalysts and their patients. Surely the question here is not merely academic but touches real life. And it is precisely when we have seen the point at which it touches life itself that we are given the true sense of the problem, as well as the indication of its solution.

III

To begin with, we should recognize a peculiar kind of unreality that infects the way in which the problem of free will is presented in our philosophic classrooms. We present it as a puzzle to tease the student into thinking. It serves this purpose somewhat like the antinomies of logic, and like the latter is indeterminate of solution unless further specifications are added. In the interest of being logical and objective we present the problem with a certain detachment. And here is the source of unreality to the problem: *we are really talking about an agent who is in fact a spectator at his own life.*

The medieval schoolmen, partly out of their own sense of amused detachment, invented the famous illustration of Buridan's ass. Imagine a poor donkey who is equally hungry and thirsty and is placed equidistant from hay and water. What will the poor beast do? Will he not remain equally and indifferently suspended between the two desires and so perish of hunger and thirst simultaneously?

No contemporary philosopher would appear to take Buridan's ass seriously. The case is a caricature at best. We have created a thoroughly artificial and unreal donkey—a beast who is suspended and hovers indifferently above his own poor animal existence. But do not philosophers create an equally unreal human agent in their own discussion of freedom? And I do not mean only those objective philosophers who go on endlessly chewing the logical cud until the juice has run out of

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it. I cannot read Sartre on freedom without sensing the ghost of Buridan's donkey hovering in the wings. On the surface everything looks different, of course: the Sartrian agent is possessed by a complex consciousness, too complex perhaps, and a freedom so absolute that Descartes—as Sartre himself notes—reserved it only for God. But this "total" freedom of which Sartre talks—does it not project before us a human being in suspension above his own existence? From there he can leap into any indifferent and absurd path that takes him out of the normal and prosaic rut. True, this freedom is dizzying, and we are haunted by anguish in being exposed to it. The *angoisse* gives an existentialist coloring to the whole account, but in fact the Sartrian agent is as detached from actual existence as Buridan's imaginary ass.

Freedom becomes a reality to us in much more mundane and humiliating situations. We know it in its harshness as a lack and a struggle rather than a superfluity of powers. The alcoholic struggling against his body shivering for that next drink knows what freedom means. Freedom becomes fully real to us in those situations when it is literally a matter of life and death. We are *in extremis*; we have fallen into a black pit and we are gasping for breath as we struggle to crawl forward. Freedom is no longer an academic debate or the dizzying luxury of an indifferent choice between alternatives. The question of freedom has turned into a cry for help.

James knew this need in the only way in which it can be known—by direct personal experience. In 1870, when he was twenty-eight, he had a severe crisis that left him in a state of acute and paralyzed melancholy. We do not know exactly what circumstances may have precipitated this crisis. James's personality, despite his open and expansive manner, is shrouded in considerably more mystery than is commonly thought. He has left us an anonymous case in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* that is now taken to be largely a description of his own experience. Why this refuge in anonymity? Would it have seemed too mawkish and unmanly, too unashamedly personal, to make public confession of something so intimate? In any case, the passage describes the kind of experience around which much of his philosophizing turns; long as it is, we need to give it in full:

> Whilst in this state of philosophic pessimism and general depression of spirits about my prospects, I went one evening into a dressing-room in the twilight to procure some article that was there; when suddenly there fell upon me without warning, just as if it came out of darkness, a horrible fear of my own existence. Simultaneously there arose in my mind the image of an epileptic patient whom I had seen in the asylum, a black-haired youth with greenish skin, entirely idiotic, who used to sit all day on one of the benches, or rather shelves, against the wall, with his knees drawn up against his chin, and the coarse grey undershirt, which was his only garment, drawn over him, enclosing his entire figure. He sat there like a sort of sculptured Egyptian cat or Peruvian mummy, moving nothing but his black eyes and looking absolutely non-human. This image and my fear entered into a species of combination with each other. *That shape am I*, I felt, potentially. Nothing that I possess can defend me against that fate, if the hour for it should strike for me as it struck for him. There was such a horror of him, that it was as if something solid within my breast gave way entirely, and I became a mass of quivering fear. After this the universe was changed for me altogether. I awoke morning after morning with a horrible dread at the pit of my stomach, and with a sense of insecurity the like of which I never knew before, and that I have never felt since. It was like a revelation; and although the immediate feelings passed away, the experience has made me sympathetic with the morbid feelings of others ever since. It gradually faded, but for months I was unable to go out in the dark alone.

We witness here such a convulsion and seizure by the unconscious that consciousness and its ideas would seem by comparison to exert only a feeble and peripheral force. Yet, on closer look, ideas play more of a role in this crisis than might first appear. It is hard for us today to recapture in imagination the stark and frightening power that the determinism embedded in physics had for the 19th-century imagination. "The molecules blindly run," the poet sang in his distress; and those molecules blindly moving would spin out our fate as they would, whatever we appeared to will in the matter. That idiot will be me, and there is nothing I can do, if the particles are already irreversibly spinning in that direction. The imagination cowered before this prospect like a Calvinist shivering at the conviction of eternal damnation. And if this philosophical idea does not of itself beget the attack of acute depression, it nevertheless intensifies that depression because any way out seems to be barred beforehand. Ideas, as we see here, can have a most potent connection with the will, in this case a negative and frustrating one.

James was to find a more positive idea to help his will out of the impasse. In the spring of 1870 a turning point seems to come and he records in his diary:

> I think that yesterday was a crisis in my life. I finished the first part of Renouvier's second *Essais* and see no reason why his definition of free will—"the sustaining of a thought *because I choose to* when I might have other thoughts"—need be the definition of an illusion. At any rate, I will assume for the present—until next year—that it is no illusion. My first act of free will shall be to believe in free will.

In comparison with the murky and subterranean atmosphere of the previous excerpt, we are

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here in the daylight world of the mind and its ideas. Perhaps too daylight; perhaps the note here is too selectively intellectual, and there were other subliminal and more obscure forces at work floating James past his blockage. We have, however, to follow him to the letter: it is an idea—in this case the idea of free will—that opens the door out of his darkness. Yet James knows—though he had not yet written his great chapters on habit in the *Psychology*—that the idea by itself is not enough; that the links between idea and will, and between will and action, must be quickly and firmly established. He proceeds therefore to put the idea immediately into action:

> For the remainder of the year, I will abstain from the mere speculation and contemplative *Grublei* in which my nature takes most delight, and voluntarily cultivate the feeling of moral freedom, by reading books favorable to it, as well as by acting. After the first of January, my callow skin being somewhat fledged, I may perhaps return to metaphysical study and skepticism without danger to my powers of action. For the present then remember: care little for speculation; much for the form of my action; recollect that only when habits of order are formed can we advance to really interesting fields of action—and consequently accumulate grain on grain of willful choice like a very miser; never forgetting how one link dropped undoes an indefinite number. . . .
>
> Hitherto, when I have felt like taking a free initiative like daring to act originally, without waiting for contemplation of the external world to determine all for me, suicide seemed the most manly form to put my daring into; now, I will go a step further with my will, not only act with it, but believe as well; believe in my individual reality and creative power. My belief, to be sure, *can't* be optimistic—but I will posit life (the real, the good) in the self-governing *resistance* of the ego to the world. Life shall be built in doing and suffering and creating.

We have dwelt on this crisis of 1870 because it gives us the human and philosophic center around which James's life was to turn. In view of the extraordinarily productive and vigorous career that was to follow this breakdown, we could rate his as one of the prime cases of a victory over neurosis. Yet we do not conquer a neurosis unless we have learned from it and in some measure preserve within us the message it had to impart in the first place. For the rest of his days James remained sensitive to the desperation that lurks always at the core of even the best regulated lives. He could understand the "sick soul" and its morbid temperament because he himself was one of the morbid. He who has once had a terrifying vision will never doubt the existence of evil in this universe of ours. The torments of the sick soul, James tells us, if viewed objectively would be less than an adequate response to the abominable and loathsome things that take place in the world. Consequently James thereafter could never accept any idealistic philosophy that would make evil disappear through some ingenious feat of dialectic. All of which gives James a sense of actuality which makes him seem close to us.

More than this. The brief entries quoted from the journal for 1870 give us in compact outline the whole of the Jamesian philosophy that was to follow. The philosophy of *The Will to Believe*, twenty-seven years later, is already summed up in a single paragraph from the diary. Everything he was to write comes in some way out of the datum he had grasped in the crossing of this valley of the shadow. He was to become a moral philosopher essentially; but a moralist preoccupied with the scope, power, and above all the source of our moral will. Even a major work like his *Psychology* fits into this large design. For what James, coming from his studies in physiology, saw in the neural impulses was that consciousness is primarily connected with the discharge of energy, with action; and that motivation must therefore be a prime factor in human conduct. Happy the thinker who knows his direction so early.

"My first act of freedom will be to believe in freedom." How cheerful and courageous this note sounds after the discord and stress of his crisis. This simple utterance of the moment is the gist of the position later taken in *The Will to Believe*. Since freedom of the will is not ruled out on strictly logical grounds, one is therefore free to believe in it. But this belief, which is not itself a strict consequence of logic, nevertheless has distinct consequences in action. To believe in one's freedom has the advantages that it liberates the will and fosters action. Faith in freedom creates its own future facts, and thus confirms itself in action.

The argument is exactly the same, but in this later context James introduced an example from an altogether more extrovert and heroic domain of human effort than the one he had known in his crisis. Let us imagine, he tells us, a mountain climber who is caught in an impasse where he has to leap across an abyss to save himself. His way is barred behind; he must go forward or perish where he is. The jump is not too long that he cannot possibly make it; yet it is long enough that there is a chance he could fall short. Which then shall he believe? That he can make the leap or that it lies beyond his powers? If he believes he can do it, James argues, then his energies will be bolstered by that very faith, and he is much more likely to succeed in his leap. And afterward, when he stands safe on the other peak, his belief will have yielded confirmation of its truth.

This example, drawn from the daredevil and adventurous life of the out-of-doors, seems a far cry from the situation of James a quarter-century earlier sitting paralyzed and despondent in his father's house in Cambridge. But perhaps the two

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situations are not so different as they appear at first glance. The melancholic, to get past his despondency, has to make a leap as heroic and total in its own way as the mountaineer's jump from precipice to precipice. Only it is not done all at once, but day by day. That makes it more difficult, and should we not therefore say more heroic? There must be the slow and dragging accumulation of what James here calls "willful choice" until the sufferer emerges at last into the open air. And in both cases the choice is forced upon us: it is a matter of life and death, of individual salvation.

IRONICALLY enough, the question of free will, in becoming real to us, has altogether changed its nature. It is no longer a question of alternative courses of action. We are no longer spectators at our own life dizzied by the gratuitous possibilities it affords. We are stuck in it up to our necks, and the question is whether we can go on at all. The question is no longer between the choice of A and B. A is life, and B death, or its moral equivalent. Everything in us cries out desperately for the choice of A, but do we have the will to make it? *The problem of free will thus becomes, more fundamentally, the problem of the will itself.* We need not go to the extreme situations of life—whether of the heroic mountain-climber or of the desperate melancholic—to see that this is so. We need only turn to the routines of ordinary life and the heavy load we must carry everyday. The voice of Samuel Beckett intones: "You must go on, I can't go on, I'll go on." That is the world in which each of us lives from day to day. The problem of the will thus becomes the problem of nihilism itself. And we are present here at what, underneath all the formal trappings of philosophy, must remain for most of us its fundamental question: Why live? Why go on? What meaning does it all have? James died before the virus of nihilism had passed from a few intellectuals into the democratic mass at large and become the epidemic of our time; and the one powerful statement of the question available to him, that of Nietzsche, he found distasteful and shied away from. Yet his sensitivity was such that the question is always there in the background for him; and that is one reason why he speaks to us at the present time.

The question of nihilism immediately places us on the terrain of the religious, whether or not we decide for or against religion. As soon as we give any utilitarian and naturalistic answers, they seem pallid beside the experience that provoked our question. Answer and question seem to pass each other by. Our will clamors for some deeper answer when its longing for freedom is in fact a cry for help. The longing for freedom is in fact a *prayer*—whether we actually voice that prayer or not. The question of morality becomes a religious one. And James, deciding at this early age to turn his intellectual energy henceforth to what he calls "the moral impulse," was in fact committing himself to becoming a religious thinker.

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From the Warsaw Ghetto

Yitzhak Zuckerman

Introduction

RESISTANCE in the ghettos of Eastern Europe during World War II was born out of the desperate knowledge that the Germans had embarked on the destruction of all the Jews. The impulse to organize armed resistance originated with the Jewish radicals, members of the Right and Left wings of the Labor Zionist parties and their ideological opponents, the socialist Jewish Labor Bund, and especially their youth affiliates, operating underground in the ghettos where they were imprisoned. Nearly half a century before, these parties had created Jewish self-defense (zelbshuts) *organizations to protect the Jews against pogromists in Czarist Russia. That spirit of defiance which the parties nurtured in their members remained alive in the ghettos, but was inhibited by the exercise of self-discipline and restraint in view of the relentless policy which the Germans pursued of exacting collective retribution from the Jewish community for the acts of individual Jews. Hoping to survive both the war and the German occupation, the Jewish parties at first abstained from outright provocation of the Germans. Yet once they realized that hope for Jewish survival was but a snare and a delusion, they began to organize for an ultimate armed struggle against the Germans, however unequal their resources, strength, and opportunities. They never envisioned their purpose as military, for they knew that they could not change the course of the war. Resistance for the Jews was purely affective—to exact vengeance from the Germans and to die fighting, to die, as they liked to phrase it, "with honor."*

In the first stage of the German occupation, before "resettlement," each Jewish underground political party operated on its own, jealously guarding its autonomy and integrity and, just as important, its security. But once the parties recognized that the Jews were living in a period of extreme crisis, that the situation demanded emergency measures, the Bund and the several Zionist bodies agreed to coordinate their efforts and to set up a joint organization for armed resistance.

Negotiations for coordinated action had begun in the spring of 1942 in Warsaw, when the underground Jewish political leaders were first assimilating the reports about the German annihilation of Jews. During the mass "resettlement" of Warsaw Jewry in the summer of 1942, while terror and death stalked the streets of the Warsaw ghetto, all efforts for joint action collapsed. In October, when the Germans suspended the murder operations for a time, negotiations among the Jews were resumed. At the same time, delegates from the Jewish parties contacted the Polish underground to explore the possibilities of arms aid. To warrant assistance from the Polish government, the Jewish parties had to show a common front that was widely representative of the whole Jewish population and that evidenced political maturity and responsibility. To meet these requirements, and also to preserve the parties' independence of political action, a Coordinating Committee was established, consisting of the Jewish Labor Bund and the Jewish National Committee (an association of the Zionist parties).

The Coordinating Committee and the Jewish Combat Organization, commonly called by its Polish acronym ŻOB (Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa), *at first operated in Warsaw only, but through its network of couriers and other underground contacts it then expanded its activity to encompass other areas of Poland as well.*

The resistance organizations in Vilna, Cracow, and Bialystok, whose members were predominantly untested youth, failed to win the support of the Jewish ghetto as a whole. In Warsaw, however, the organized underground was broadly representative and it achieved legitimacy as the authentic leadership of Warsaw Jewry. This legitimacy and authority were won through the effective use of two weapons: the mimeograph machine and the gun. Through their leaflets and proclamations ŻOB and the Coordinating Committee maintained contact with the ghetto populace, gave them news about German plans and intentions,

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YITZHAK ZUCKERMAN was born in 1915 and now lives in Israel. In 1942 he was among the initiators of the Jewish Combat Organization (ŻOB) in the Warsaw ghetto. The present account of the origins and development of the Warsaw resistance movement was written in 1944 and forwarded through underground channels to London. Translated from the Polish by Ted Hudes and Mark Nowogrodzki, and appearing here in English for the first time, it will be included (in somewhat expanded form) in *A Holocaust Reader*, edited by LUCY S. DAWIDOWICZ, to be published by Behrman House in January. Mrs. Dawidowicz is professor of social history at Yeshiva University and the author of, most recently, *The War Against the Jews 1933-1945*.

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outlined the direction of coming events, interpreted their political meaning, and provided the cues for appropriate responses. By carrying out death sentences against Jewish informers and collaborators, ŻOB became the protector of the ghetto Jews, assuming the leadership vacated by the impotent Judenrat, *the Nazi-appointed Jewish Council.*

After an abortive military action in January 1943 against a German attempt to "resettle" the remaining Warsaw Jews, ŻOB began to prepare in earnest for the ultimate ordeal of final liquidation. That day came on April 19, 1943, when the battle of the Warsaw ghetto began. A few hundred young Jews with a pitifully small arsenal of weapons stood up against the military might of the SS, the Waffen-SS, and their helpers. On April 23, 1943, on the fifth day of battle, ZOB issued a proclamation to the Polish population on the other side of the ghetto walls: "Let it be known that every threshold in the ghetto has been and will continue to be a fortress, that we may all perish in this struggle, but we will not surrender."

After the Germans destroyed the Warsaw ghetto, a few survivors of ŻOB and of the Coordinating Committee and its constituent bodies continued their clandestine activities on the "Aryan" side of Warsaw. There, in March 1944, Yitzhak Zuckerman wrote the report that follows. It was the death chant of Warsaw Jewry.

—LUCY S. DAWIDOWICZ

ASSUMING that you are generally familiar with the process of the liquidation of Polish Jewry and the defense of the ghettos, we wish to give you in this review details which, for the sake of truth, must not be lost without trace and which will help you understand the struggle of the Jews from the day the Germans began murdering them—to which we responded with defense action, creating a Jewish combat organization.

As the Germans crossed into the territories east of the Bug River, a new chapter in the history of the Jews under German occupation began—the total destruction of Jewish settlements. It started with Vilna and the Vilna area. Tens of thousands of Jews were shot in the woods of Ponary, while the survivors had not yet learned that Ponary meant death.

The Jews in the Generalgouvernement* had by then been almost hermetically locked in ghettos for over a year. The only links between the ghettos were smugglers and the couriers of illegal Jewish underground groups. News was disseminated by the clandestine Jewish press. However, the events in the northern provinces were totally unknown. At the end of October 1941, a courier of the Hehalutz† was sent to the areas of Bialystok, Vilna, and Lithuania to establish contact with the movement there. He returned in the middle of November with the incredible news that the Germans were murdering the Jews and that tens of thousands had already perished. The courier had been an eyewitness to the mass deportation of all the Jews from Troki** and its surrounding area to an island on Troki Lake, where they were killed by machine-gun fire and buried in a mass grave. Shortly thereafter a delegation of a Jewish group from Vilna reached Warsaw. They had come in order to obtain weapons and funds. The delegation submitted a report during a large conference attended by prominent communal leaders: more than 50,000 unsuspecting Jews had been transported to Ponary. In Vilna, outside the ghetto walls, a larger group of Jews engaged in passive resistance, refusing deportation and demanding to be shot on the spot. The Germans did not open fire. They were still concealing their destructive intent from public opinion. They brought the Jews back to the ghetto and there forced them into vans and shipped them to Ponary.

The Hehalutz representatives expressed their belief that the actions in Vilna were the beginning of the liquidation of Polish Jewry and that preparations for an active defense should be undertaken. A few conference participants felt that the extermination work of the Germans was an act of vengeance against Jews residing in territories previously occupied by the Soviets, that such events could not take place in the Generalgouvernement and especially not in Warsaw, situated in the heart of Europe. Hehalutz did not agree with this appraisal and began organizing combat units.

In January 1942 Frumka Plotnicka†† succeeded in reaching the province of Wolyń; she found out that in all the towns and villages the Jews had been killed, and that only Kowel still remained the site of a larger Jewish settlement.

Also in January a few Jewish refugees from the Reich arrived in Warsaw; they said they had escaped from Chelmno and that there the Germans were transporting all Jews into nearby forests on special trucks. They were gassed in those trucks, and the bodies buried in the woods. Thousands of Jews had already perished, but even in the neighboring towns people refused to believe that Chelmno meant death.

The area all around the Generalgouvernement was in flames. But in the Generalgouvernement itself calm still reigned. In the middle of March Hehalutz convened a preliminary conference of political parties. After submitting the latest reports on the events in the eastern and western areas and analyzing the situation as the first step toward the annihilation of Polish Jews, the He-

* The name given to the civil administration of Poland, established by German decree after the occupation, with Hans Frank as Governor General.

† Federation of Zionist Pioneering Organizations.

** A small town about twenty kilometers from Vilna, with a pre-war Jewish population of about 450.

†† A leading member of the *halutz* movement in Poland. She was killed during the resistance in Bedzin in August 1943.

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halutz representative made the following concrete proposals:

1) To establish a general Jewish combat organization.
2) To create a joint body of all Jewish political parties and Jewish youth organizations to serve as a representative vis-à-vis the civil authorities of the Polish underground and a delegation of the combat organization similarly with regard to the Polish military underground.
3) To organize on the Aryan side an apparatus to procure arms and to establish shops in the ghetto to manufacture arms.

These proposals were supported by both Right and Left Labor Zionists. Orzech, representing the Bund, stated that it was premature to talk of a joint combat organization. Each organization or party should, instead, build its own combat units. A joint representation does not come into consideration. The Bund is committed to a socialist policy, not to a pan-Jewish policy.

The meeting yielded no positive results.

At about this time, at the initiative of the Left Labor Zionists, an understanding was worked out among all the anti-fascist, labor, and youth organizations and factions except for the Bund. This bloc set itself the following tasks:

1) To organize a joint political and propaganda force against fascism and the reactionary forces inside the ghetto.
2) To create anti-fascist combat units.
3) To organize help for the victims in the anti-fascist struggle.

The bloc began publishing a joint periodical called *Der Ruf* ("The Call"). Within a short time, a broad network of combat "fives" sprang up. A few hundred young people and workers belonged to these units. Despite the lack of arms, the combat "fives" underwent military training. The Anti-Fascist Bloc created the first large-scale fighting cadres, which—despite arrests of its leaders and the destruction of its apparatus—became the keystone of the Jewish Combat Organization, created later.

DURING Passover 1942 the liquidation of the Jews in the Generalgouvernement got under way. The Jews in Lublin became the first victims, followed soon after by the Jews of the entire Lublin district. They were deported to Belzec and there put to death in newly erected gas chambers. The Jewish underground press carried extensive reports about these mass murders. But Warsaw did not believe. Simple common sense refused to accept the possibility of the mass destruction of tens and hundreds of thousand of Jews. It was argued that the Jews were being transported to the newly-occupied Russian territories for farm work! Views were voiced that the Germans had started to convert the Jewish lower class to higher productivity! The Jewish press was decried for panic-mongering, even though the descriptions of the deportation actions were strictly true. The news about the German crimes was received with incredulity and mistrust —not only abroad. Even here, in the immediate vicinity of Ponary and Chelmno, Belzec and Treblinka, these reports found no credence. Unfounded optimism went hand in hand with ignorance; to those isolated from the outside world, the present situation proved their point: for two-and-a-half years many deportations had been staged by the Germans—from Cracow, Lublin, the Warsaw region, from the Reich—and there was no lack in victims and blood. But total destruction?

There were those who did believe the truth about Ponary and Chelmno, but they said, "This is only a whim of the local authorities." For, after all, until death leveled all the Jews in the Generalgouvernement, the German authorities had no uniform approach to the ghettos in the cities and towns. In many a place people responded to the news about German murders which we had disseminated by saying, "Nothing like that could happen here."

Of course this optimistic mood was fostered by the Germans. For two-and-a-half years the total extinction of three-and-a-half million Polish Jews was being prepared with German thoroughness. By means of murder, oppression, hunger; by means of ghettos and deportations, the Jewish masses were being prepared for inaction. Years of continuous experimentation brought about refinement in the German methods of meting out death. In Vilna a few days were required to murder a thousand Jews, in Chelmno half an hour sufficed to kill one hundred. In Treblinka ten thousand people were put to death every day.

Hundreds of thousands of Jews went without resistance. (If one does not believe in death, why should one offer resistance?) Indeed, many volunteered for "resettlement." Where to? Letters arrived from Bessarabia, Smolensk, Minsk, with reports that the new settlers had arrived safely and were satisfied. This, of course, was a German hoax. And thus—with heavy hearts, to be sure—Jews said farewell to their old settlements and went to "foreign places—for farm work." They were forced by the hopelessness, by the lack of prospects, by hunger. In Warsaw alone, during 1941, 6,000 Jews died monthly of starvation and contagious diseases; during the period of the "resettlements," the price of bread in Warsaw jumped from 7 zlotys a kilo to 80.

The ghetto walls split an organism of three-and-a-half million into thousands of cells, sunk into terrible destitution. The ghetto walls separated the Jews from the outside world and also from themselves. In the days of destruction, every community confronted its fate on its own.

In the cities where the Germans carried out their destructive efforts, they divided the Jewish population into "productive" and "nonproductive" groups—those subject to deportation and those who were to remain. Thus with devilish perfidy they succeeded in thwarting at the source

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any possibility of unified resistance: every Jew stood by himself, while the entire German machinery of destruction was against him.

The liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto was preceded by two acts of mass terror on the part of the Germans. They murdered 110 Jewish prisoners "for offering resistance to the German authorities" and on the night of April 17, 1942, they dragged from their homes 49 Jews, from all walks of life and political groupings, murdered them in the streets, left their bodies wherever the murder took place. By applying the principle of "collective responsibility," they sought to destroy all opposition. If resistance was weak during this first liquidation action, it was not because of fear—the fighters had enough firm determination and faith, but their hands were empty.

On Wednesday, July 22, the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto began. Immediately a communal council was convened to consider the situation and take appropriate measures. Opinions were divided. The representatives of the leftist Zionist groups, of Hehalutz, as well as several other political leaders, demanded decisive action. The majority, however, was for waiting. How long? Until the situation became clarified. Reports were circulating that 50-70,000 Jews would be deported from Warsaw, and with that the action would be ended. All others would remain. Consequently, the more active elements, the leftist factions in the Anti-Fascist Bloc, jointly with the Bund, formed a united labor committee which was to assume responsibility for the fate and honor of the ghetto. By that time the action had been in full swing for five days, with unprecedented, indescribable horror. Every heedless step meant death. Crossing a street was like crossing the frontier of two belligerent states on the front lines. In those circumstances, it is easy to understand the difficulties in maintaining contact and communication as well as coordinating action.

On July 28, 1942, a conference was called of Hehalutz and the youth groups associated with it: Hashomer Hatzair, Dror, and Akiva. It was decided to create the Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa, Jewish Combat Organization, whose Polish-language appeals were signed with the initials ŻOB. The High Command comprised: Samuel Braslaw, Yitzhak Zuckerman, Zivia Lubetkin, and Mordecai Tenenbaum. A delegation was sent to the Aryan side to establish contact with the Polish underground movement and obtain weapons.

A combat organization was created, but the total arsenal of the entire ghetto was one single pistol.

We were witness to a heroic stance of Jews who resisted the Germans on numerous occasions. They are the unknown who appear in the files as "5,394 shot," reported in the official German accounts of the "resettlement" action. Yet what could be accomplished by a combat organization operating with hundreds of young boys and girls prepared for every contingency, but totally unarmed (except for that single pistol) against the Germans, Ukrainians, Latvians, and Lithuanians who were armed to the teeth? Impatiently we awaited the first transport of arms from the Aryan side. Meanwhile we decided:

To issue a proclamation to the Jewish population, explaining that "resettlement" meant Treblinka and that Treblinka meant death; suggesting that Jewish men hide their wives and children and then resist German orders.

To forge German "life cards" and distribute them among those not fortunate enough to find work in the German shops and hence regarded as "nonproductive" elements. (Many thousands of such factory cards were distributed.)

Owing to the fact that the Jewish police as well as the *Judenrat*—like the Ukrainians and the Letts—became the executors of German orders, they were to be actively opposed in their dastardly work. The commandant of the Jewish police, Josef Szeryński, was condemned to death.

To our amazement and bitterness our proclamation did not, at the time, find acceptance. People were still incredulous. The Jews were being led to their death, and the Jewish postal service in the ghetto was active. "Greetings" from the deported Jews arrived and the news spread through the ghetto with lightning speed. Thousands of people, driven by hunger and despair, volunteered day after day for "resettlement." At the staging area (*Umschlagplatz*), the Nazis "mercifully" distributed three kilograms of bread and one kilogram of marmalade to the volunteers.

After the evacuation of entire streets and districts, we set fire to several dozen empty houses to prevent Jewish belongings from falling into German hands. The fires reached their greatest intensity the night of August 20. On that day also ŻOB fired its first shot: Israel Kanal seriously wounded Josef Szeryński with two bullets. The attempt on the life of Szmerling, an officer of the Jewish police, failed.

The following day we received from our comrades on the Aryan side five pistols and eight hand grenades. In our circumstances, a real treasure! Meantime, since the action was interrupted—the German "Resettlement Commandos," or the Annhilation Commandos, as the Germans themselves called these monsters, moved elsewhere in the Warsaw district to do their work and only a very few Germans were on the ghetto streets—we decided that day to attack the Germans and Ukrainians entering on Smocza Street, in the sector between Nowolipie and Dzielna Streets.

But bad luck seemed to jinx our activities. A group of comrades, whom we had previously dispatched to the Hrubieszów forest to organize partisan action, perished. (We had sufficient forces, but lacked arms!) A similar fate met the detachment we sent into the Miedzyrzec woods. On September 3, 1942, the Gestapo arrested Joseph Kap-

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lan.* A few hours later, Samuel Braslaw was murdered in the street by the Germans and in the evening our pitiful arsenal of arms and ammunition fell into their hands. Thus all our efforts to defend the honor and dignity of the Warsaw Jews were aborted from the start.

On September 5, the Germans renewed their action and it took forms that went beyond previous events. On September 12, the day the action was declared completed, not many more than 50,000 Jews were left in the ghetto. These were crowded into four small ghettos. The area between Ghetto I and Ghetto II was a "neutral zone," where nobody lived. The area between Ghetto I and Ghetto IV was part of the Aryan district.

One felt ashamed to be alive! Many comrades argued that the ghetto ought to be set on fire, that one ought to attack the Germans with bare fists and die. Others advised taking advantage of the lull between the first liquidation and the next one to build up the combat organization and to acquire quantities of arms. This latter course was taken. Hehalutz adopted the following resolutions:

> 1) To dispatch couriers to all cities to mobilize the remaining ghettos. . . .
> 2) To strengthen cooperation with all political and community groups; the right and left-wing factions of the Labor Zionist party immediately offered cooperation. Negotiations with the Bund dragged on. . . .

During the three months of relative quiet in the ghetto, we succeeded in partially arming the combat units of Dror and Hashomer Hatzair; other groups were still in their organizational and training stages at that time.

THE FIRST ŻOB armed action took place in Cracow. On December 24, 1942, ŻOB's Cracow branch carried out an act of vengeance against the Germans. A few coffee houses frequented by the Germans were attacked with hand grenades, and a few higher Gestapo officers were shot. The Germans announced twenty as the number of killed and wounded. This action, however, was also the end of ŻOB activities in Cracow. A few days later, the Cracow organization, including Laban, its heroic leader, fell into German hands.

On January 18, 1943, strong detachments of German gendarmes, SS, and military surrounded the Warsaw ghetto. In the two preceding days the Nazis had undertaken a series of large-scale raids on the Aryan side and carried out mass arrests, and the Jews in the ghetto least expected a German action at that time. At daybreak, the Germans took control of all streets and entries to the ghetto. Workers going to the factories were taken to the *Umschlagplatz* without having their "productivity" checked. Others managed to take cover. Volunteers for "resettlement" no longer showed up. During the past three months hiding places had been prepared in attics and cellars; rooms were walled in, double ceilings were built. Only a few resistance groups remained outside the shelters, trained as best they could be. Some of the armed units in the Central Ghetto under the command of Mordecai Anielewicz deliberately allowed themselves to be seized together with a few hundred other Jews. When they reached the corner of Zamenhof and Niska, they opened fire on the Germans. The Jews being led to death scattered, and the Germans panicked and fled. Soon, however, overcoming their first fright, the Germans returned with reinforcements. There were losses on both sides. The ranks of the Jews began to thin out. After an hour's battle, the entire group perished with the exception of the commander, who miraculously got away.

Other groups waged partisan warfare within the buildings. The results of this battle exceeded our greatest expectations. The Germans were panic-stricken before entering buildings and they discontinued the action on the third day.

In the area of the workshops, Israel Kanal headed a small group of heroic fighters. As a result of these battles, we seized more than a dozen guns and pistols, and we killed or wounded fifty Germans.

Beginning in February, the Germans proceeded with the further partial liquidation of the ghetto in Czestochowa. There a small group of Jewish combatants, armed with a few pistols delivered to them by the Warsaw ŻOB, actively fought the Germans. It was an indescribably tragic picture: old rusted pistols jammed and failed. The fighters attacked the Germans with their bare fists and all perished by German bullets. This mute heroism elicited astonishment and admiration even from the Germans.

THE passive resistance of the civilian populace as well as the combat of the ŻOB units forced the Germans to discontinue the liquidation action in Warsaw. The populace hid in shelters; when caught, they broke the sides of the freight cars and jumped off the trains running at full speed. A few Jews even managed to escape from Treblinka. The repercussion of the shooting and exploding hand grenades electrified the population. Everywhere the fighters were greeted as saviors. The population supported them as best they could: bakers made gifts of bread, leather workers made holsters. The Combat Organization grew in numbers and strength from day to day.

Since the funds provided by the Citizens' Committee could not meet the budget, which ran into millions, the Combat Organization levied higher taxes upon the wealthier elements of the Jewish population. Strong methods applied against shirkers resulted in regular tax payments. Tax delinquents were arrested. The Jewish workshop managers, the Jewish police, and all those who

* A leader of Hashomer Hatzair.

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had business dealings with the Germans were heavily fined. The *Judenrat* and its institutions were requested to contribute about one million zlotys. This contribution was paid within three days.

ŻOB could call on twenty-two fighting groups. Nine of the groups were billeted in the Central Ghetto, eight in the area of the Többens-Schultz workshops, and five in the brushworks ghetto.

The mainstay of the ŻOB arms supply was a larger arms transport delivered by the Polish military authorities. It consisted of pistols, hand grenades, and explosives. Further, with the funds raised, we bought a few hundred more pistols and ammunition. For a Visa or Parabellum [automatic revolvers] we paid between ten and fifteen thousand zlotys!

For long weeks we dug tunnels all the way to the gates of the ghetto where the German sentries were posted, and we laid mines. We also started a relentless and ruthless fight against all traitors, those who collaborated with the Germans or who demoralized the ghetto by their immoral attitudes. Those who did not escape to the Aryan side were executed by ŻOB.

The atmosphere was cleared! The remnants of Warsaw Jewry, purged in the most monstrous trials of fire and blood, breathed more freely. During the January actions, the Warsaw ghetto evidenced the change in mind and conduct of the surviving Jews. The Germans also had to take account of this. But obviously neither the populace's brave posture nor the fierce resistance put up by the Combat Organization could influence the ghetto's fate, which was already sealed. The Germans, however, did not want to suffer losses and they decided to finish the Warsaw ghetto in a "peaceful" manner, having in mind two goals:

1) To make use of those "fit to work" for war production, obviously only for as long as they were needed;

2) By separating those "fit to work" from the "nonproductive" (for the most part, those able to work, but shunning employment in German enterprises), to weaken the ghetto and destroy it morally by arousing hatred and jealousy between those Jews marked "to stay alive" and those whose death was only a matter of days.

At the beginning of February 1943, the owners of German enterprises began a broadly conceived effort to induce the shop workers to register for voluntary evacuation. "Warsaw will be cleansed of Jews," they proclaimed at specially convened workers' meetings; only those who would leave for Poniatowa and Trawniki, where the shops would be relocated, would be sure of bread and of "lasting through the war." To emphasize the "civilian" character of the resettlement, the industrialist Többens, rather than an SS representative, was named to head the resettlement effort.

The first enterprises chosen to be liquidated were the Hallmann carpentry factory and the brushworks. ŻOB began an immediate counteraction in word and deed. During the night preceding the evacuation set for the Hallmann factory, a unit of the Combat Organization got inside the factory and completely burned the buildings, all the raw materials, and the machinery already packed. The Germans in the factory area fled in panic. The ŻOB unit withdrew without casualties. Next day, only twenty-five of the 1,000 workers showed up for evacuation, while not one of the 3,500 workers in the brushworks turned up. A group of sixty Jews imprisoned at the Schultz shops was freed by ŻOB in plain view of the German guards. Not only did the authority of ŻOB grow among the Jewish population but the Germans also had to regard it very seriously. On March 14, ŻOB posted a proclamation calling for resistance to the German decrees and emphasizing that the "voluntary" resettlement was nothing but the inevitable annihilation of the ghetto. Next to our proclamations Többens affixed his own notices on March 20 (most of which ŻOB confiscated when it learned they were printed).

The German shop owners did not lag far behind their SS compatriots in treachery. In addition, Többens had the audacity, through the intermediary of some of his Jewish stooges, to invite the Combat Organization to a conference on the subject! But the German propaganda bore no fruit. No one believed in it.

The German plans dissolved in complete fiasco. This time they did not succeed in dividing the strength of the remaining handful. If the Germans issued a death sentence upon the entire Jewish community—then, let us die in battle! That was ŻOB's decision.

THE NIGHT of April 18 the final act of the tragedy of the Warsaw ghetto began. It was intended as a birthday gift for the Führer.

ŻOB rose to fight. At 2:00 A.M. the Germans posted patrols, 25 meters apart, composed of Germans, Letts, and Ukrainians, around the walls of the ghetto. Singly, by twos and threes, the Germans entered the uninhabited part of the ghetto, aiming to surprise the fighters and the populace. At 2:30 A.M. the first dispatches from our outpost sentries signaled the concentration of large military units within the ghetto. At 4:00 A.M. all combat groups were at their assigned positions. They were ready to receive the entering enemy properly. At 6:00 A.M. a contingent of 2,000 heavily armed SS men entered the Central Ghetto, with tanks, rapid-fire guns, three trailers loaded with ammunition, and ambulances. Waffen-SS units were accompanied by the entire "Resettlement" staff. The Jewish populace was nowhere to be seen; all were hidden in underground bunkers or other hiding places. Only ŻOB was on the alert aboveground. The fighters were located at three ghetto key points, which controlled access to the main ghetto streets. The first engagement took place at Nalewki, where two barricaded combat

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groups defended the street. The first battle ended with victory for the fighters. The Germans retreated, leaving many dead. At the same time, the main onslaught took place at the corner of Zamenhof and Mila. The fighters, barricaded at all four corners of the intersection, attacked the main German column entering the ghetto. After the first machine-gun salvo and well-aimed grenades tossed against the SS in marching formation, the street emptied. Green uniforms were nowhere to be seen. They hid in stores and entries of nearby buildings. Single shots were exchanged. Fifteen minutes later tanks passed through the checkpoint and moved hard against the very positions of the fighters. Incendiary bottles, aimed carefully and calmly, hit a tank. The flames spread with unexpected rapidity. An explosion erupted. The tank was immobilized. Its crew was burned alive. The remaining two small tanks retreated immediately, followed by the hastily retreating Germans, who were being picked off by accurate fire and grenades. The Germans lost some 200 in killed and wounded. Our losses: one fighter.

Two hours later, the Germans moved their guns into the inter-ghetto area and began to harass our positions. Their access seemed clear, our position taken. Suddenly from the windows on the opposite side of the street (Zamenhof 29), grenades showered down on the Germans. One of our groups, which had hitherto held its fire so as not to disclose its existence, attacked the Germans once again on the same spot. Our group withdrew without losses. At 5:00 P.M. the Germans were no longer within the ghetto. They had withdrawn into the uninhabited areas. We had the upper hand, having taken them swiftly by surprise from well-camouflaged positions.

The second day of the action began with the concentration of larger SS detachments in the inter-ghetto area and on the Aryan side. The main force, however, did not enter the inhabited section. About 3:00 P.M., a group of 300 SS men approached the gate of the brushworks area. They stopped only for a while, but this sufficed for our fighters to explode an electrically-operated mine under the SS men's feet. The Germans fled, leaving 80-100 dead and wounded. Two hours later they returned to the area, cautiously, in single file, battle-ready. The fighters waited for them. Thirty Germans entered, but only two got out. They were attacked with grenades and incendiary bottles. Those who were not killed by the grenades were burned alive. Only then did the Germans call in their artillery. The block was placed under fire from four sides. At the same time, two higher SS officers appeared on the scene and asked the fighters to lay down their arms, proposing to halt operations for fifteen minutes. Otherwise the entire area would be bombed. The reply consisted of a few shots. On the opposite side of the block, from Franciszkańska Street, another SS detachment entered, but they did not get far. They were scared off by a few rounds of rifle fire. Once again, the area was clear of Germans. This was the second total victory for the fighters.

On the same day, voluntary conscription for labor camps was announced in the area of the Többens and Schultz shops. But there were no volunteers, nobody came forward. Here, as in the Central Ghetto, all inhabitants were in underground shelters. The shop management kept extending the deadline for voluntary resettlement every few hours, but without success. After an announcement that the same methods used in the Central Ghetto would perforce have to be applied here, fighting groups billeted in these areas attacked an SS detachment on the Aryan side with bombs and grenades, leaving forty killed and many wounded, and also attacked other units on Smocza and Nowolipie, marching toward the Central Ghetto. On orders of the police leader, Globocnik, who had been brought in from Lublin especially for the action, the Germans started setting fire to the ghetto on the second day of the action. The first buildings set afire were those houses and blocks where resistance was encountered: at 33, 35, 37 Nalewki; 28 and 19 Mila; 28 Zamenhof; then the entire block of the brushworks (this was the first gigantic conflagration). In response to this, the fighters set fire to all the Werterfassung warehouses as well as the shop stores, worth several tens of millions of zlotys.

The action continued. The Germans began a search for the hideouts. Their task was made easier because the insufferable heat forced some people to leave the shelters at night; their telltale traces led to the hideouts. Listening devices and police dogs proved very helpful to the Germans. At this time the fighters shifted from offensive to defensive tactics. They attempted, as far as possible, to rescue the people in the shelters. A reshuffling of the forces took place. Many combat groups were assigned to shelters. On the sixth day of the action, defensive battles in the Többens and Schultz areas began. The fighters took positions inside the buildings and in the attics, barring the Germans from the shelters. Every day the fighters defended the populace in the shelters in different places. Particularly sharp engagements were fought at 41 Nowolipki; 78, 76, 74 Leszno; 67, 69 Nowolipie. The combat groups also undertook offensive action. Whenever the Germans tried to force their way into the ghetto, heroic resistance forced their retreat, leaving hundreds of dead on the battlefield. Ashamed of their continued defeats, they started a rumor that the defense of the ghetto was led by German deserters. But they had to take the ghetto. Artillery was brought in and heavy batteries were placed on Krasiński Square, Muranowski Square, and Swietojerska and Bonifraterska streets.

The outright siege of the ghetto began. Flame throwers spread death among the populace. Planes cruising overhead dropped explosive and incendiary bombs. The entire district, set on fire

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on all sides, was in flames, causing thousands of deaths. In their desperation Jews would jump from the highest floors of the buildings. Those who managed to leave the buildings alive perished by German bullets. The combat groups, driven from their positions by the raging flames, turned to new tactics. They organized a guerrilla struggle among the ruins, where they lay in ambush for the German units. The battles went on without interruption day and night. The Germans were forced to fight for every street, for every house. The situation, nevertheless, became increasingly intolerable. The fighters had almost no losses, but, exhausted by the continuous struggle, they had no place to rest, for the entire ghetto was aflame. The pavement became a sticky pulp of tar because of the intense heat. The food reserves went up in flames. The wells, which had been dug with such effort, became filled with rubble from the crashing buildings. Worst of all, the supplies of ammunition ran out. The fighters now moved through the streets in small groups, dressed in German uniforms and helmets, their feet covered with rags so as to deaden the sound of their footsteps. They attacked Germans marching past in decreasing numbers. The flames instead did the fighting for the Germans, as well as the planes and the artillery stationed behind the ghetto walls.

After a thorough examination of the situation, the ŻOB command decided to send a delegation to the Aryan district to establish contact with the ŻOB representative there. We mustered our forces to organize a rescue action. During the night of May 8, Simcha Rathauser, the ghetto emissary, returned to the ghetto to help evacuate some people. But it was too late.

With the help of special listening instruments and police dogs, the Germans began to uncover the underground Jewish shelters. On May 8, the Germans surrounded the main bunker of the Combat Organization and closed all its five entries. In this helpless situation, Aryeh Wilner addressed the fighters and summoned all to commit suicide, lest they fall into German hands alive. Lutek Rotblat was the first, shooting his mother, then himself. In this shelter most members of the Combat Organization met their deaths, including its commandant, Mordecai Anielewicz. We rescued from the ghetto some eighty people, most of whom, however, later perished on the Aryan side or in the forests.

After the heroic defense of the Warsaw ghetto, the liquidation and defense of the ghettos in Czestochowa, Bialystok, Bedzin, and other cities took place. The most tenacious and heroic was the struggle fought by the Bialystok ŻOB. Thanks to the help of the vice president of the Bialystok Jewish Council, Ephraim Barash, who made explosives experts and raw materials available to ŻOB, grenades and various acids useful in defense were manufactured within the ghetto itself. Mordecai Tenenbaum was in command of ŻOB fighting units. The first skirmish took place on Fabryczna Street, while the fiercest battles were fought on Bialostoczańska Street, where a Jewish machine gun was emplaced. As in Warsaw, the Germans brought in armor and heavy field artillery. The bitter fighting lasted eight days. Acts of armed resistance on the part of the Jews lasted for a long time—more than a month. The Jews killed or badly wounded a few hundred Germans and Ukrainians. To break the fighters' resistance the Germans set fire to the ghetto, as they did in Warsaw, and the ghetto was burned to the ground. The entire sector of the railroad tracks between Bialystok and Malkinia and Treblinka was covered with the bodies of escapees who had jumped from the trains. From the roofs of the freight cars the Ukrainians incessantly fired machine guns at the escaping Jews. Only a handful of Jews succeeded in escaping and hiding in the villages and forests.

The destruction of the murder chambers of two large death camps, Treblinka and Sobibór, by Jewish inmates will be inscribed in golden letters in the chronicles of the Jewish resistance. The struggle in Sobibór, near Chelm Lubelski, took place in the following circumstances: some 600 surviving Jewish prisoners in this death camp organized into combat fives and, at a prearranged time, started an armed action. On October 14, 1943, the Jews killed all the German and Ukrainian camp wardens and set fire to the crematorium, gas chambers, clothing stores, and barracks, cut the barbed wire, and escaped to the neighboring woods. While crossing the mined area surrounding the fences, some 200 people were killed; and the following day close to sixty were caught by the Germans during a roundup and shot on the spot. The rest hid in the forests and villages.

Thanks to the help provided by the Warsaw ŻOB, the combat organizations in Czestochowa, Bedzin, and Trawniki offered resistance during the German liquidation of these centers, fighting to the last bullet. A handful of Czestochowa ŻOB members managed to escape, and they remained in the forests.

In spite of the most difficult conditions in which we live, and despite the numerous sacrifices which we have been forced to make as members of a conspiratorial movement and as Jews, the Jewish Combat Organization continues its activities, preparing the young in the remaining Jewish centers for the hopeless battles which will undoubtedly take place.

—March 1944

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In the Community

A Literary Approach to the Bible

Robert Alter

It is a little astonishing that at this late date there exists virtually no serious literary analysis of the Hebrew Bible. By serious literary analysis I mean the manifold varieties of minutely discriminating attention to the artful use of language, to the shifting play of ideas, conventions, tone, sound, imagery, narrative viewpoint, compositional units, and much else; the kind of disciplined attention, in other words, which through a whole spectrum of critical approaches has illuminated, for example, the poetry of Dante, the plays of Shakespeare, the novels of Tolstoy. The nearly total absence of such critical discourse on the Hebrew Bible is all the more perplexing when one recalls that the masterworks of Greek and Latin antiquity have in recent decades enjoyed an abundance of astute literary analysis, so that we have learned to perceive subtleties of lyric form in Theocritus as in Marvell, complexities of narrative strategy in Homer or Virgil as in Flaubert.

In making such a flatly negative assertion about biblical criticism, I may be suspected of polemical distortion impelled by the animus of a modern literary person against antiquarian scholarship, but I do not think this is the case. There has been, of course, a vast amount of scholarly work on the Bible over the past hundred years or more. It would be easy to make fun of the endless welter of hypotheses and counter-hypotheses generated in everything from textual criticism to issues of large historical chronology; but the fact is that, however wrong-headed or extravagantly perverse many of the scholars have been, their enterprise as a whole has enormously advanced our understanding of the Bible. Virtually all this activity has been what we might call "excavative"—either literally, with the archeologist's spade and reference to its findings, or with a variety of analytic tools intended to uncover the original meanings of biblical words, the life situations in which specific texts were used, the sundry sources from which longer texts were assembled. Although much remains debatable—necessarily so, when we are separated from the origins of the texts by three millennia—the material unearthed by scholarship has clearly dispelled many confusions and obscurities.

Let me offer one brief example. The ancient city of Ugarit at the site of Ras Shamra on the Syrian coast, first excavated in 1929, has yielded a wealth of texts, some of them strikingly parallel in language and poetic convention to familiar biblical passages. Among other things, the Ugaritic texts report in epic detail a battle between the regnant land god, Baal, and the sea god, Yamm. Suddenly, a whole spate of dimly apprehended allusions in Psalms and Job came into focus: an antecedent epic tradition had been assimilated into the recurrent imagery of God's breaking the fury of the elemental sea or shackling a primordial sea monster. Thus, when Job cries out (7:12), *ha-yam ani im tanin,* he is not asking rhetorically whether he is the sea, but, with a pointed sardonic allusion to the Canaanite myth, he is saying: "Am I Yamm, am I the Sea Beast, that you should set a guard over me?"

Excavative scholarship, then, demonstrably has its place as a necessary first step to the understanding of the Bible, but I have found little evidence that much more than excavation has been going on, except, of course, for the perennial speculations of the theologians built on biblical texts. A systematic survey of the state of knowledge in the field, Herbert F. Hahn's *The Old Testament in Modern Research* (first edition 1954, updated to 1970 through an appended bibliographical essay by Horace D. Hummel), delineates source analysis, anthropology, sociology, comparative religion, form criticism, archeology, and theology as the relevant major areas of professional study—but nothing at all which any literary person would recognize as literary inquiry. Still more revealing as a symptom of the need for a literary perspective is Otto Eissfeldt's massive *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (revised edition, 1965), widely regarded as one of the most authoritative general reference works in the field. Most of Eissfeldt's considerations, of course, are purely excavative, but when the nature of the biblical materials confronts him with literary categories, his apparent authoritativeness begins to look shaky. Thus, he divides biblical narrative into myths, fairy tales,

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sagas, legends, anecdotes, and tales, using these problematic terms with a casualness and a seeming indifference to their treatment in other disciplines that are quite dismaying. Or again, his eight-page summary of conflicting scholarly theories on biblical prosody painfully illustrates how the scholars have read biblical poetry with roughly the intellectual apparatus appropriate to the decipherment of cuneiform inscriptions, multiplying confusion by the invention of elaborate pseudo-mathematical systems of scansion and by the wholesale importation of terms and concepts from Greek prosody. The inadequacy of all this becomes transparent when one compares it to the wonderfully incisive analysis of biblical verse as a "semantic-syntactic-accentual" rhythm by Benjamin Hrushovski—not a Bible scholar but a leading authority in the field of poetics and comparative literature—in his synoptic article on Hebrew prosody for the 1971 edition of the *Encyclopedia Judaica.*

THE one book-length study by a Bible scholar of which I am aware that tries to use a literary perspective is Edwin M. Good's *Irony in the Old Testament* (1965), but this turns out to be in a double sense an exception that proves the rule. One sympathizes with Good's complaints about the general indifference of his colleagues to literary issues and with the reasonableness of his declared intention merely to make a modest start in the right direction. His book is engaging enough, and offers some useful local perceptions, but it has no real critical method, no way of adequately discriminating the complex distinctive forms of biblical literary art. Instructively, the only literary critic or theorist cited is Northrop Frye, and the concept of irony here becomes so elastic that it threatens to lose its descriptive usefulness. Elsewhere, of course, we have had sensitive "appreciations" of the Bible's imaginative power by literary people like Mark Van Doren, Maurice Samuel, and Mary Ellen Chase. Good's book often seems like such an appreciation rather than a rigorous critical analysis, though it happens to be joined with a professional knowledge of Hebrew philology, source criticism, and ancient Near Eastern history.

The one obvious reason for the absence of scholarly literary interest in the Bible is that, in contrast to Greek and Latin literature, the Bible was regarded for so long by both Christians and Jews as the primary, unitary source of divinely revealed truth. This belief still makes itself profoundly felt, both in reactions against and perpetuations of it. The first several waves of modern biblical criticism, beginning in the 19th century, were from one point of view a sustained assault on the supposedly unitary character of the Bible, an attempt to break it up into as many pieces as possible, then to link those pieces to their original life-contexts, thus rescuing for history a body of texts that religious tradition had enshrined in timelessness, beyond precise historical considerations. The momentum of this enterprise continues unabated, so that it still seems to most scholars in the field much more urgent to inquire, say, how a particular psalm might have been used in a hypothetically reconstructed temple ritual than how it works as an achieved piece of poetry. At the same time, the potent residue of the older belief in the Bible as the revelation of ultimate truth is perceptible in the tendency of scholars to ask questions about the biblical view of man, the biblical notion of the soul, the biblical vision of eschatology, while for the most part neglecting phenomena like character, motive, and narrative design as unbefitting the study of an essentially religious document. The fact that such a substantial proportion of academic biblical studies goes on in theological seminaries, both here and in Europe, institutionally reinforces this double-edged pursuit of analyzed fragments and larger views, with no literary middle ground.

The very rare exceptions to this general rule have occurred, as in the case of the Hrushovski article, when a literary scholar with a grasp of biblical Hebrew has addressed himself to biblical materials, approaching them from some larger literary perspective.* The one celebrated instance is the immensely suggestive first chapter of Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis,* in which the antithetical modes of representing reality in Genesis and the Odyssey are compared at length. Auerbach must be credited with showing more clearly than anyone before him how the cryptic conciseness of biblical narrative is a reflection of profound art, not primitiveness, but his insight is the result of penetrating critical intuition unsupported by any real method for dealing with the specific characteristics of biblical literary forms. His key notion of biblical narrative as a purposefully spare text "fraught with background" is at once resoundingly right and too sweepingly general. Distinctions have to be made for narratives by different authors, of different periods, and written to fulfill different generic requirements. An arresting starkness of foreground, an enormous freight of background, are beautifully illustrated in the story of the Binding of Isaac which Auerbach analyzes, but those terms would have to be seriously modified for the

* What happens when literary scholars do not know Hebrew is vividly illustrated by a recent volume, *Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives,* edited by Kenneth R. R. Gros Louis, with J.S. Ackerman and T.S. Warshaw (Abingdon Press, 352 pp., $6.95). The title is promising enough, as are the emphatic statements of literary purpose in the introductory essays, but the contributions—more than half are the editor's—by well-meaning professors of English rarely go beyond rhapsodic paraphrase or the delineation of recurrent patterns, real and imagined. The one exception in the volume is an intelligent analysis of Exodus 1-2 by James A. Ackerman, a professional Bible scholar.

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psychologically complex cycle of stories about David, for the deliberately schematic folk-tale frame of the Book of Job, or for a late (in part, satirical) narrative like Esther, where in fact there is a high degree of specification in the foreground of artifacts, costume, court customs, and the like.

MOVING beyond Auerbach toward the definition of a specific poetics of biblical narrative are three important articles by Menakhem Perry and Meir Sternberg, two young Israeli literary scholars, which appeared in the Hebrew quarterly, *Ha-Sifrut*. The first of these, "The King through Ironic Eyes" (Summer 1968), is a brilliant verse-by-verse analysis of the story of David and Bathsheba demonstrating—to my mind, conclusively—that an elaborate system of gaps between what is told and what must be inferred has been artfully contrived to leave us with at least two conflicting, mutually complicating interpretations of the motives and states of knowledge of the principal characters. This reading, which insists on a structural analogy between the story in Samuel 2 and Henry James's deliberate ambiguity in *The Turn of the Screw*, stirred up a hornets'-nest of protest. The most recurrent theme of the article's critics was that the biblical story was, after all, religious, moral, and didactic in intention, and so would hardly indulge in all this fancy footwork of multiple ironies that we moderns so love. (Implicit in such a contention is a rather limiting notion of what a "religious" narrative is, or how the insight of art might relate to a religious vision. This is a central question to which we shall return.) Perry and Sternberg, whose one signal fault as writers is a fatiguing tendency to elaborate their points in excessive detail, responded (Summer 1970) with a rejoinder of over 50,000 words (!) in which they convincingly argued that they had not imposed modern literary criteria on the Bible but rather had meticulously observed what were the general norms of the biblical narrative itself and in what significant ways the story in question diverged from those norms.

More recently, Sternberg, writing alone (Spring 1973), has provided a shrewdly perceptive analysis of the story of the rape of Dinah, concluding his discussion with a general description of the spectrum of rhetorical devices, from explicit to (predominantly) oblique, through which biblical narrative conveys moral judgments of its characters. Anyone interested in the narrative art of the Bible has much to learn from all three of these articles. The rigor and subtlety of Perry and Sternberg's readings in themselves lend support to the programmatic assertion they make at the end of their response to their critics: "The perspective of literary studies is the only relevant one to the consideration of the Bible *as literature*. Any other discipline, real or imagined, runs the danger of inventing groundless hypotheses and losing touch with the literary *power* of the actual biblical story."

Having been taught so much by Perry and Sternberg, I would like to express two small reservations about their approach, one perhaps just a quibble over formulation, the other an issue of method. The idea of "the Bible as literature," though particularly contaminated in English by its use as a rubric for superficial college courses and for dubious publishers' packages, is needlessly concessive and condescending toward literature in any language. (It would at the very least be gratuitous to speak of "Dante as literature," given the assured literary status of Dante's great poem, though the *Divine Comedy* is more explicitly theological, or "religious," than most of the Bible.) Perry and Sternberg, answering their critics, characterize the biblical story as "a junction of purposes which generate relations of complementarity and tension." "One such purpose," they go on to say, "is the 'aesthetic' aim" to which at least one of their critics makes a gesture of concession. Rather than viewing the literary character of the Bible as one of several "purposes" or "tendencies" (*megamot* in the original), I would prefer to insist on a complete interfusion of literary art with theological, moral, or historiosophical vision, the fullest perception of the latter dependent on the fullest grasp of the former. This point has been aptly made by Joel Rosenberg, a young American scholar and poet, in an admirably intelligent general rationale for a literary perspective on the Bible recently published in *Response* (Summer 1975): "The Bible's value as a religious document is intimately and inseparably related to its value as literature. This proposition requires that we develop a different understanding of what literature is, one that might—and should—give us some trouble." One could add that the proposition also requires, conversely, that we develop a somewhat more troublesome understanding of what a religious document might be.

One leading emphasis of the Rosenberg essay points to what I think is a methodological deficiency in Perry and Sternberg's otherwise exemplary analyses. They tend to write about biblical narrative as though it were a unitary production just like a modern novel that is entirely conceived and executed by a single independent writer who supervises his original work from first draft to page proofs. They turn their backs, in other words, on what historical scholarship has taught us about the special conditions of development of the biblical text and about its frequently composite nature. Rosenberg, by contrast, is keenly aware of historical scholarship, and he sees its findings, in a way the historical scholars themselves have not, as aspects of the distinctive artistic medium of the biblical authors. Here is his comment on the Pentateuch, the set of biblical narratives most thoroughly analyzed into antecedent sources by the

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scholars: "It may actually improve our understanding of the Torah to remember that it is *quoting* documents, that there is, in other words, a purposeful documentary *montage* that must be perceived as a unity, regardless of the number and types of smaller units that form the building blocks of its composition. Here, the weight of literary interest falls upon the activity of the *final* redactor, whose artistry requires far more careful attention than it has hitherto been accorded." The last clause if anything understates the case, since biblical critics frequently assume, out of some dim preconception about the transmission of texts in "primitive" cultures, that the redactors were in the grip of a kind of manic tribal compulsion, driven again and again to include units of traditional material that made no connective sense, for reasons they themselves could not have explained.

There is no point, to be sure, in pretending that all the contradictions among different sources in the biblical texts can be happily harmonized by the perception of some artful design. It seems reasonable enough, however, to suggest that we may still not fully understand what would have been perceived as a real contradiction by an intelligent Hebrew writer of the early Iron Age, so that apparently conflicting versions of the same event set side by side, far from troubling their original audience, may have sometimes been perfectly justified in a kind of logic we no longer apprehend. In any case, the validity of Rosenberg's general claim can, I think, be demonstrated by a careful reading of countless biblical narratives. I would like now to illustrate this through an extended example, combining the Perry-Sternberg emphasis on rhetorical means with Rosenberg's awareness that the composite nature of the text is a condition of its art.

Accustomed as we are to reading narratives in which there is a much denser specification of fictional data, we have to learn, as Perry and Sternberg have shown, to attend more finely to the complex, terse expressive details of the biblical text. (Traditional exegesis in its own way did this, but with far-reaching assumptions about the text as literal revelation which most of us no longer accept.) Biblical narrative is laconic but by no means in a uniform or mechanical fashion. Why, then, does the narrator ascribe motives to or designate states of feeling in his characters in some instances, while elsewhere he chooses to remain silent on these points? Why are some actions minimally indicated, others elaborated through synonym and detail? What accounts for the drastic shifts in the time-scale of narrated events? Why is actual dialogue introduced at certain junctures, and on what principle of selectivity are specific words assigned to characters? In a text so sparing in epithets and relational designations, why are particular identifications of characters noted by the narrator at specific points in the story? Repetition is a familiar feature of the Bible, but it is in no way an automatic device: when does literal repetition occur, and what are the significant variations in repeated verbal formulas?

Finally, to understand a narrative art so bare of embellishment and explicit commentary, one must be constantly aware of two features: the repeated use of narrative analogy, through which one part of the text provides oblique commentary on another; and the richly expressive function of syntax, which often bears the kind of weight of meaning that, say, imagery does in a novel by Virginia Woolf or analysis in a novel by George Eliot. Attention to such features leads not to a more "imaginative" reading of biblical narrative but to a more precise one; and since all these features are linked to discernible details in the Hebrew text, the literary approach is actually a good deal *less* conjectural than the historical scholarship which asks of a verse whether it contains possible Akkadian loan-words, whether it reflects Sumerian kinship practices, whether it may have been corrupted by scribal error.

LET me propose for analysis a supposedly interpolated story because it will give us an opportunity to observe both how it works in itself and how it interacts with the surrounding narrative material. I should like to discuss, then, the story of Tamar and Judah (Genesis 38) which is set in between the selling of Joseph by his brothers and Joseph's appearance as a slave in the household of Potiphar. This story (usually ascribed to the J Document after a mingling of J and E in the previous episode) is characterized by E. A. Speiser, in his superb Genesis volume in the Anchor Bible series, as "a completely independent unit," having "no connection with the drama of Joseph, which it interrupts at the conclusion of Act I." The interpolation does, of course, as Speiser and others have recognized, build a sense of suspense about the fate of Joseph and a feeling of time elapsed until Joseph shows up in Egypt, but Speiser's failure to see its intimate connections through motif and theme with the Joseph story suggests the limitations of conventional biblical scholarship even at its best. I shall begin with the last four verses of Chapter 37 in order to make clear the links between frame-narrative and interpolation. My translation will at a number of points be awkwardly literal to reproduce verbal repetitions or syntactic peculiarities of the original for the purposes of analysis.

Joseph's brothers, one recalls, after selling him, dip his cherished tunic in goat's blood to show to their father.

"They had the ornamented tunic brought to their father [note the indirection of their approach to Jacob, even more marked in the Hebrew syntax], and they said: 'This have we found.

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Please recognize [*haker-na*], is it your son's tunic or not?' " The brothers are careful to let the contrived object, "this" (*zot*), do their lying for them—it goes before them literally and syntactically—and of course they appropriately refer to Joseph as "your son," not by name or as their brother. Jacob now has his prop, and from here on he can improvise his own part: "He recognized it [*vayakirah*], and he said: 'My son's tunic! An evil beast has devoured him,/ Joseph has fallen prey.' " *Haker,* the verb for recognition (which we will be seeing more of), stated by the brothers in the imperative, immediately recurs in the perfect tense, Jacob responding at once as the puppet of his sons' manipulation.

It should be observed (I am not sure the scholars have) that when Jacob goes on here to invent a disastrous explanation, left unstated by his sons, for the bloodied tunic, his speech ("An evil beast . . .") switches into formal verse, a neat semantic parallelism that scans with three beats in each hemistich: *hayáh ra'áh akhaláthu/ taróf toráf yoséf.* Poetry is heightened speech, and the shift to formal verse suggests an element of self-dramatization in the way Jacob picks up the hint of his son's supposed death and declaims it metrically before his familial audience. If this seems fanciful, I would direct attention to how Jacob's bereavement is described in the next two verses: "Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his loins, and mourned his son many days. All his sons and daughters tried to console him but he refused to be consoled, saying, 'No, I will go down to my son in the Pit mourning,' thus did his father bewail him." In two brief verses half-a-dozen different activities of mourning are recorded, including the refusal to be consoled, and direct speech in which the father expresses the wish to mourn until he joins his son in death. (Later, ironically, he will "go down" to his son not to Sheol, the Pit, but to Egypt.) One can hardly dismiss all these gestures of mourning as standard Near Eastern practice, since the degree of specification and synonymity is far beyond the norms of the narrative itself. Thus, just a few verses earlier (37:29), when Reuben imagines Joseph is dead, his sincere sense of bereavement is expressed quite simply with "He tore his clothes"—in the Hebrew only two words and a particle.

Finally, the extravagance of Jacob's mourning is pointed up by the verse that immediately follows it and concludes the episode: "And the Midianites sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, courtier of Pharaoh, his chief steward." Modern translations usually render the initial *vav* of this verse with something like "meanwhile," but that loses the artful ambiguity of the Bible's parataxis. In this cunningly additive syntax, on the same unbroken narrative continuum in which Jacob is mourning his supposedly devoured son, Midianites are selling the living lad: "And his father bewailed him and Midianites sold him"—for even the sentence break would not have been evident in the ancient text.

At this point (Chapter 38), with an appropriately ambiguous formulaic time indication, *vayehi ba'et hahi,* "at about that time," the narrative leaves Joseph and launches on the enigmatic story of Tamar and Judah. From the very beginning of the excursus, however, pointed connections are made with the main narrative through a whole series of explicit parallels and contrasts:

> 1. At about that time Judah parted from his brothers and camped with an Adullamite named Hirah. 2. There Judah saw the daughter of a Canaanite named Shua, married her, and lay with her. 3. She conceived and bore a son, whom they named Er. 4. She conceived again and bore a son, whom she called Onan. 5. Then she bore still another son, whom she called Shelah; he was in Chezib when she bore him. 6. Judah got a wife for Er his first-born, and her name was Tamar. 7. Er, Judah's first-born, displeased God, and God took his life. 8. Judah said to Onan: "Lie with your brother's wife and fulfill your duty as a brother-in-law, providing seed for your brother." 9. But Onan, knowing the seed would not be his, let it go to waste on the ground whenever he lay with his brother's wife, in order not to give seed for his brother. 10. What he did displeased God and He took his life, too. 11. Then Judah said to Tamar his daughter-in-law, "Stay as a widow in your father's house until Shelah my son grows up," for he thought, "He, too, might die like his brothers." And Tamar went off to live in her father's house.

THE story begins with Judah parting from his brothers, an act conveyed with a rather odd locution, *vayered me-et,* literally, "he went down from," and which undoubtedly has the purpose of connecting this separation of one brother from the rest with Joseph's, transmitted with the same verb-root (see, for example, the very beginning of the next chapter: "Joseph was brought down [*hurad*] to Egypt."). There is thematic justification for the connection since the tale of Judah and his offspring, like the whole Joseph story, and indeed like the entire book of Genesis, is about the reversal of the iron law of primogeniture, about the election through some devious twist of destiny of a younger son to carry on the line. There is, one might add, genealogical irony in the insertion of this material at this point of the story, for while Joseph, next to the youngest of the sons, will eventually rule over his brothers in his own lifetime as splendidly as he has dreamed, it is Judah, the fourth-born, who will be the progenitor of the kings of Israel, as the end of Chapter 38 will remind us.

In any case, the preceding block of narrative had ended with a father bemoaning what he believed to be the death of his son. Chapter 38 begins with Judah fathering three sons, one after another in breathless narrative pace. Here, as at

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other points in the episode, nothing is allowed to detract our focused attention from the primary, problematic subject of the proper channel for the seed (since this is thought of both figuratively and in the most concretely physical way, I have translated it literally throughout). In a triad of verbs that admits nothing adventitious, Judah sees, takes, lies with a woman; and she, responding appropriately, conceives, bears, and—the necessary completion of the genealogical process—gives the son a name. Then, with no narrative indication of any events at all in the intervening time, we move ahead an entire generation to the inexplicable death ("he displeased God") of Er, Judah's first-born, after his marriage with Tamar. The first-born very often seem to be losers in Genesis by the very condition of their birth—the epithet "first-born," hardly needed as identification, is asserted twice here, almost as though it explained why Er displeased God—while an inscrutable, unpredictable principle of election other than the "natural" one works itself out. The second son, Onan, however, makes the mistake of rebelling by *coitus interruptus* against the legal obligations of the system of primogeniture, refusing to act as his dead brother's proxy by impregnating the widow in the brother's name, and so he, too, dies. Interestingly, after we have been exposed to Jacob's extravagant procedures of mourning over the imagined death of one son, Judah's reaction to the actual death in quick sequence of two sons is passed over in complete silence: he is only reported delivering pragmatic instructions having to do with the next son in line. If this striking contrast underscores Jacob's excesses, it surely also makes us wonder whether there is a real lack of responsiveness in Judah, and thus indicates how parallel acts or situations are used to comment on each other in biblical narrative.

After the death of the second son, the narrator gives us (verse 11) Judah's direct speech to Tamar as well as Judah's interior speech explaining his motive, but no response on the part of Tamar is recorded. This may suggest silent submission, or at least her lack of any legal options as a childless young widow, and it certainly leaves us wondering about what she is feeling, something which her actions will presently elucidate. There is one small but tactically effective hint that Judah is in the wrong: when he addresses Tamar, she is identified as "Tamar his daughter-in-law," an otherwise superfluous designation that reminds us of his legal obligation to provide her a husband from among his sons.

At this point we are given another time indication to mark the next stage of the story, in which the tempo of narration will slow down drastically to attend to a crucial central action:

> 12. A long time afterward, Judah's wife, the daughter of Shua, died; after being consoled, he went up toward Timnah to his sheep-shearers, together with his friend Hirah the Adullamite.

All the information in this verse is essential for what follows. Tamar has been allowed to linger mateless "a long time," so that her own perception, reported two verses later, that she has been deliberately neglected, is given an objective grounding. Judah has been widowed and the official period of mourning has passed—that is the meaning of "being consoled," but it is worth translating literally because it stands in contrast to Jacob's previous refusal to be consoled—so Tamar can plausibly infer that Judah is in a state of sexual neediness. Here begins her bold plan:

> 13. And Tamar was told, "Your father-in-law is coming up to Timnah for the sheepshearing." 14. Then she took off her widow's garments, covered her face with a veil, wrapped herself up, and sat down at the entrance to Enaim on the road to Timnah, for she saw that Shelah was grown up and she had not been given to him as a wife. 15. Judah saw her and took her for a harlot because she had covered her face. 16. So he turned aside to her by the road and said, "Look here, let me lie with you," for he did not realize she was his daughter-in-law. She answered, "What will you pay me for lying with me?" 17. He replied, "I'll send you a kid from my flock." She said, "Only if you leave a pledge until you send it." 18. And he said, "What pledge should I leave you?" She replied, "Your seal and cord, and the staff you carry." He gave them to her and he lay with her and she conceived by him. 19. Then she got up, went away, took off her veil, and put on her widow's garments. 20. Judah sent the kid by his friend the Adullamite to redeem the pledge from the woman, but he could not find her. 21. He inquired of the men of the place, "Where is the cult prostitute, the one at Enaim by the road?" and they answered, "There has been no cult prostitute here." 22. So he went back to Judah and told him, "I couldn't find her, and the men of the place even said, 'There has been no cult prostitute here.' " 23. Judah said, "Let her keep the things, or we shall become a laughingstock. I did, after all, send her this kid, but you could not find her."

UNTIL this point Tamar had been a passive object, acted upon—or, alas, not acted upon—by Judah and his sons. The only verbs she was the subject of were the two verbs of compliance and retreat, to go off and live, at the end of verse 11. Now, a clear perception of injustice done her is ascribed to Tamar (verse 14), and she suddenly races into rapid, purposeful action, expressed in a detonating series of verbs: in verse 14 she quickly takes off, covers, wraps herself, sits down at the strategic location, and after the encounter, in verse 19, there is another chain of four verbs to indicate her brisk resumption of her former role and attire. (One might usefully compare this to the rapid series of verbs attached to Rebecca's activities, 27: 14-17, as she prepares

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through another kind of deception to wrest the birthright from Isaac for her son Jacob.) Judah takes the bait—his sexual appetite will not tolerate postponement though he has been content to let Tamar languish as a childless widow indefinitely—and here we are given the only extended dialogue in the story (verses 16-18). It is a wonderfully businesslike exchange, reinforced in the Hebrew by the constant quick shifts from the literally repeated "he said" (*vayomer*) to "she said" (*vatomer*). Wasting no time with preliminaries, Judah immediately tells her, "Let me lie with you" (literally, "let me come to you," or even, "let me enter you"), to which Tamar responds like a hard-headed businesswoman, finally exacting the rather serious pledge of Judah's seal and cord and staff, which as the legal surrogate of the bearer would have been a kind of ancient Near Eastern equivalent of all a person's major credit cards.

The agreement completed, the narrative proceeds in three quick verbs (the end of verse 18)—he gave, he lay, she conceived—to Tamar's single-minded purpose, which, from her first marriage, has been to become the channel of the seed of Judah. When the Adullamite comes looking for Tamar, he asks, decorously enough, for a cult prostitute (*qedeshah*) though Judah had in fact thought he was dealing with an ordinary whore (*zonah*). The local people answer quite properly that there has been no *qedeshah* in that place, an assertion which receives special emphasis through the narrative contrivance by which it is repeated verbatim in Hirah's report to Judah. Nor, we may be led to think, has there been a *zonah* in that place, but only a wronged woman taking justice into her own hands. We are now prepared for the climax of the story.

> 24. About three months later, Judah was told, "Tamar your daughter-in-law has played the harlot [*zantah*] and what is more she is with child by harlotry [*zenunim*]." And Judah said, "Take her out and let her be burned."

The naked unreflective brutality of Judah's response to the seemingly incriminating news is even stronger in the original, where the synthetic character of biblical Hebrew reduces his deadly instructions to two words: *hotziuha vetisaref*. As elsewhere, nothing adventitious is permitted to intervene between intention and fulfilled purpose, and so the next two words of the text go on from Judah's command almost as if there had been no time lapse, as though there were no perceptible interval between magically powerful speech and the results of speech: Judah says, *hotziuha*, take her out, and the next two words, in a rare present passive participle, are *vehi mutzet*, literally, "And she is being taken out." But this is the last instant before Tamar's triumphant revelation:

> 25. As she was being taken out, she sent word to her father-in-law, "By the man to whom these belong, by him am I with child." And she added, "Please recognize [*haker-na*], to whom do these belong, this seal and cord and staff?" 26. Judah recognized [*vayaker*] them and he said, "She is more in the right than I for I did not give her to my son Shelah." And he was not intimate with her again.

The whole inset of Chapter 38 then concludes with four verses devoted to Tamar's giving birth to twin boys, her aspiration to become the mother of male offspring realized twofold. Confirming the pattern of the whole story and of the larger cycle of tales, the twin who is about to be second-born somehow "bursts forth" (*parotz*) first in the end, and he is Peretz, progenitor of Jesse, from whom comes the house of David.

If some readers may have been skeptical about the intentionality of the analogies I have proposed between the interpolation and the frame-story, such doubts should be laid to rest by the exact recurrence at the climax of Tamar's story of the formula of recognition, *haker-na* and *vayaker*, used before with Jacob and his sons. This is manifestly the result not of some automatic mechanism of interpolating traditional materials but of careful splicing of sources by a brilliant literary artist. The first use of the formula was for an act of deception; the second use is for an act of unmasking. Judah with Tamar after Judah with his brothers is an exemplary narrative instance of the deceiver deceived, and since he was the one who proposed selling Joseph into slavery instead of killing him (37: 26-27), he can easily be thought of as the leader of the brothers in the deception practiced on their father. Now he becomes their surrogate in being subject to a bizarre but peculiarly fitting principle of retaliation, taken in by a piece of attire, as his father was, learning through his own obstreperous flesh that the divinely appointed process of election cannot be thwarted by human will or social convention. In the most artful of contrivances, the narrator shows him exposed through the symbols of his legal self given in pledge for a kid (*gedi 'izim*), as before Jacob had been tricked by the garment emblematic of his love for Joseph which had been dipped in the blood of a goat (*se'ir 'izim*). Finally, when we return (Chapter 39) from Judah to the Joseph story, we move in pointed contrast from a tale of exposure through sexual incontinence to a tale of seeming defeat and ultimate triumph through sexual continence—Joseph and Potiphar's wife.

These notes, of course, are not by any means an exhaustive analysis of the material in question, but they may illustrate the usefulness of trying to look carefully into the literary art of a biblical text. This sort of critical

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discussion, I would contend, far from neglecting the Bible's religious character, focuses attention on it in a more nuanced way. The implicit theology of the Hebrew Bible dictates a complex moral and psychological realism in biblical narrative because God's purposes are always entrammeled in history, dependent on the acts of individual men and women for their ongoing realization. To scrutinize biblical personages as fictional characters is to see them more sharply in the multifaceted, contradictory aspects of their human individuality, which is the biblical God's chosen medium for His experiment with Israel and history. Such scrutiny, however, as I hope I have shown, cannot be based merely on an imaginative impression of the story but must be undertaken through minute critical attention to the biblical writers' articulations of narrative form.

In the example we have considered, Judah and Jacob-Israel are not simple eponymic counters in an etiological tale (this is the flattening effect of some historical scholarship) but are individual characters surrounded by multiple ironies, artfully etched in their imperfections as well as in their strengths. A histrionic Jacob blinded by excessive love and perhaps loving the excess; an impetuous, sometimes callous Judah, yet capable of candor when confronted with hard facts; a fiercely resolved, steel-nerved Tamar—all such subtly indicated achievements of fictional characterization suggest the endlessly complicated ramifications and contradictions of a principle of divine election intervening in the accepted orders of society and nature. The biblical tale, through the most rigorous economy of means, leads us again and again to ponder complexities of motive and ambiguities of character because these are essential aspects of its vision of man created by God enjoying or suffering all the consequences of human freedom. Different considerations would naturally have to be explored for biblical poetry. Almost the whole range of biblical narrative, however, embodies the basic perception that man must live before God in the transforming medium of time incessantly and perplexingly in relation with others; and a literary perspective on the operations of narrative may help us more than any other to see how this perception was translated into stories that have had such a powerful, enduring hold on the imagination.

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Fiction

Lonely Rituals

Hilton Kramer

ARNOLD BENNETT, reviewing *Dodsworth*, observed that the novels of Sinclair Lewis "have always one admirable quality: they are *about* something." What living novelist, intending praise, would make a remark like that about a distinguished fellow writer today? To do so would be an act of the gravest intellectual gaucherie. The art of fiction, insofar as it aspires to be regarded *as* art, is no longer expected to be "about" anything so mundane as (in Bennett's words) "a definite, important, and understandable theme, which affects whole classes and even whole nations." What suffices—what is, indeed, preferred—is a fastidious collision of ego and artifice. In what is sometimes called "the new fiction"—perhaps to distinguish it from those outmoded "old" novels that combined a minimum standard of readability with a cast of credible characters—the workaday details of common experience are steadfastly avoided in the effort to render, as perfectly as possible, a pure state of mind. Even that most encompassing of all fictional genres—the picaresque tale of adventures in unfamiliar worlds—has been effectively transformed into a chronicle of the mind's errant lucubrations.

This effort to abridge or wholly to eclipse the traditional impositions of the prosaic in the writing of prose fiction is undeniably a powerful artistic ideal just now. But in literature, as in life, the ideal often proves unobtainable. The need for fiction to be "about" something somehow persists even in the face of the author's fondest dreams of eliminating it. The "something" that fiction is "about" may have become woefully shrunken and abstract, an object so minuscule that the imagination all but labors in vain in its effort to establish some compelling sense of involvement with it, but it is there. It survives, if nowhere else, in the very place where the author has labored hardest to remove it: his style.

In the widely praised novels of Jerzy Kosinski, certainly, the reader is instantly enclosed in a style calculated to vanquish the commonplaces of experience. Fictional artifice, carried to an icy and antiseptic perfection, is designed here to jettison everything but the gratifications of the authorial voice, and this voice—so much more powerful and "real" than any of the characters or actions it describes—is the locus of a distinct, and distinctly repugnant, moral atmosphere. It is the voice of revenge, seeking to impose its will on a world that has proved resistant to the unfettered appetites of the ego. The world which denies these appetites their unqualified victory over experience is stripped of its quotidian attributes, and its place taken by a malevolent abstraction more amenable to the authorial fantasy of power and subjugation. Style thus serves as a coefficient of moral retribution, silencing all independent life.

*Cockpit** offers yet another example of Mr. Kosinski's assiduous style and the moral vision it has been created to serve. Its speaker and protagonist and only significant character, the hateful and omnipotent Tarden, is an impresario of elaborately staged punishments, and its action consists of splintered anecdotes in which his cruel and carefully devised entrapments are recounted with a detached but undisguised erotic relish. Tarden, we are asked to believe, is a former agent for some unspecified government "service"—presumably the CIA, but perhaps other "services" as well. Now, for reasons that, like all motivation and causation in this book, remain obscure, he is a fugitive of sorts, and living under an assumed name—a name that is, indeed, a "fiction": a fact we are expected to invest with surpassing significance—yet he enjoys a freedom of movement unknown to lesser mortals. Societies high and low the world over are magically accessible to him. Expertly knowing in the ways of money, business, medicine, diplomacy, technology, and quick disguise; expert too in duping hotel clerks, government bureaus, and beautiful women; and endowed with prodigious memory, athletic skill, unlimited funds, and sexual charisma, he devotes his unbounded freedom to unlovely scenarios of self-satisfaction. Not the least of these are episodes of apparent sexual defeat which mysteriously contribute to his self-esteem. When, in *Cockpit*, an erection is not forthcoming, a whore turns out to be an inviolable virgin, or a lady acrobat is sealed against penetration, Tarden emerges nevertheless as the moral victor.

Some of the gamier anecdotes involve Tarden's eavesdropping upon and secretly photographing his girl friend making love to another man in a rendezvous carefully prepared by himself, and the gang rape of another woman whose life is spared for the purposes of having her murdered by means of radiation. (This, too, calls for much fancy camera work: Tarden is, throughout, a paragon of the photographic enterprise.) Other episodes are excursions into still other varieties of sexual humiliation, gratuitous violence, and the

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* Houghton-Mifflin, 249 pp., $8.95.

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observation of grotesques. At every turn, the "crimes" are themselves grotesquely out of proportion to the lurid punishments. All of Tarden's victims are strangers, naturally, for he is everywhere a tourist on the make—a genius at measuring others' vulnerabilities on first contact, and quickly exploiting them for harsh purposes never explained. Always aglow with unappeased erotic energy, he lives as a libertine of violence, a Don Juan whose conquests are guaranteed to fail his exacting standards of exoneration. All must in some way be punished, if not by death then by what, in the mirror-world of *Cockpit,* is construed as a fate almost worse than death: the withholding of the hero's sexual favors.

It is all, of course, the sheerest nonsense, a succession of narcissistic pirouettes danced in a mind vacant of human contact, but it is, like so much of the new fiction, portentous nonsense, nonsense parading itself as arcane wisdom. It purports to tell us something important, even urgent, about the fate of the world; it offers us a moral fable for the times. Not for nothing does *Cockpit* close on a quotation from Dostoevsky's *The Possessed:* we are meant to reflect on its transcendent implications. But what these seem to come to is something Mr. Kosinski could hardly have intended, for they add up to little more than a parody of the famous Dostoevskian dictum: If the CIA exists, so the episodes of *Cockpit* suggest, then everything is permitted. This, I am afraid, is just about the size of Mr. Kosinski's moral imagination. This is the miserable little object that lies buried beneath the debris of all the pointless intrigue. And the scenario designed to serve such a dubious proposition does not even have the virtue of examining its implications in relation to anything remotely resembling recognizable experience.

The unspeakable Tarden is, in the end, only another self-bemused embodiment of that tiresome modern convention, the anti-hero, drawn to the specifications of that threadbare genre, the anti-novel. In this version, the anti-hero has transferred to the realm of personal gratification, if not indeed to a private dream world, all the license and eccentricity, all that freedom from scruple and constraint traditionally attributed to the cardboard protagonists of the spy thriller. It is, in its way, an inspired literary hybrid, this crossing of the anti-novel with the spy thriller, even if the French had already produced the first specimens—inspired, because what both these genres have in common is precisely what a writer of Mr. Kosinski's radical isolation most desperately needs as his *donnée*: the freedom to ignore all worldly plausibility. In exercising that freedom with such determination and force, he does indeed tell us something important about the pathology of the literary imagination at the present moment. But he leaves the world of the novel untouched, for like the life it is obliged somehow to reflect, it too requires that minimum degree of human contact he eschews.

In the stories that Leonard Michaels has gathered in *I Would Have Saved Them If I Could,** we descend from this icecap of the implausible to a more familiar, not to say well-trodden, world. We are restored to the antic embrace of the self-conscious, self-doubting, self-mocking male offspring of the New York Jewish middle class, with his furiously articulate rigmarole of shame, frustration, complaint, and overweening ambition that, whether in pampered childhood, rebellious adolescence, or disabused manhood, somehow fails to realize its fondest dreams. In this crowded literary terrain, Mr. Michaels has staked out a distinct, if extremely narrow, corridor of his own. There is no room in it for robust buffooneries, lengthy tirades, extended narrative, or outsize energies of any sort. All the familiar emotions are miniaturized, reduced to an emblematic distillation, refined to an essence. There is, in these very short stories, fragments of stories, and notes for stories, something like a shortage of oxygen, a concentration and constriction so intense and short-breathed that the author seems able to speak to us only by emitting brief, muffled screams of pain. Were the terrain less crowded, the source of this pain might, perhaps, be altogether baffling, for the stories themselves rarely disclose the roots of the malaise they express. Mr. Michaels is not the sort of writer to fill in a landscape, deck out a character, or dwell for long on the specifications of circumstance. As it is, he scarcely needs to bother. We know these scenarios by heart, and all that remains for him to do—all, in any case, he chooses to do—is to expose, with a neat surgical precision, the particular nerve in question.

If there is something immensely impressive in this extreme concision of statement—and there is—there is also something sadly wanting in it. For here again we find ourselves in the presence of an object—exquisitely made, in this case, but nonetheless minuscule in size—altogether insufficient in scale to support the intense artistry lavished upon it. Reading a story called—what else?—"Storytellers, Liars, and Bores," which is, of course, about

* Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 188 pp., $7.95.

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION

(Act of August 12, 1970; Section 3685, Title 39, United States Code) Dating of Filing: September 29, 1975. Title of Publication: Commentary. Frequency of Issue: Monthly. Location of Known Office of Publication: 165 East 56th Street, New York, N.Y. 10022. Location of the Headquarters or General Business Offices of the Publishers: 165 East 56th Street, New York, N.Y. 10022. Publisher: American Jewish Committee, 165 East 56th Street, New York, N.Y. 10022. Editor: Norman Podhoretz, 165 East 56th Street, New York, N.Y. 10022. Managing Editor: Marion Magid, 165 East 56th Street, New York, N.Y. 10022. Owner: American Jewish Committee, 165 East 56th Street, New York, N.Y. 10022 (non-profit membership corporation incorporated by legislature of the State of New York). Known Bond-holders, Mortgagees, and other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: None. For Completion by Nonprofit Organizations Authorized to Mail at Special Rates: The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for Federal income tax purposes have not changed during the preceding 12 months. Extent and Nature of Circulation: A. Total No. Copies Printed (Net Press Run): Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months, 59,905. Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date, 58,017. B. Paid Circulation. 1. Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors and Counter Sales: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months, 2,540. Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date, 2,650. 2. Mail Subscriptions: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months, 54,228. Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date, 52,582. C. Total Paid Circulation: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months, 56,768. Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date, 55,232. D. Free Distribution by Mail, Carrier or Other Means: Samples, Complimentary and Other Free Copies: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months, 1,280. 2. Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date, 1,702. E. Total Distribution (Sum of C and D): Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months, 58,048. Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date, 56,934. F. Copies Not Distributed: 1. Office Use, Left-Over, Unaccounted, Spoiled After Printing: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months, 1,857. Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date, 1,083. 2. Returns From News Agents: Average No. of Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months, 387. Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date, 480. G. Total (Sum of E and F): Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months, 59,905. Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date, 58,017. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. Ronald Greene, Business Manager.

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the trials of a writer of stories ("After work I'd see my newest friend, the one who told me boring stories. Her name was Memory"), and which ends with a dream in which the author imagines himself being introduced to Kafka ("He shook my hand, then wiped his fingers on his tie"), I am reminded of Cyril Connolly's observation, in *Enemies of Promise*, that "The perfectionists, the art-for-art's-sakers, finding or believing life to be intolerable except for art's perfection, by the violence of their homage can render art imperfect." Connolly is speaking, in this passage, of literary dandyism, and Mr. Michaels is indeed a bit of the dandy, abjuring commonplace locutions and mundanities in favor of elegant and macabre metaphor ("Sentences issuing from my mouth took the shape of eels and went sliding away among the faces in the room, like elegant metals, slithering in subtleties, which invited and despised attention"). He is very much the perfectionist ("remarkable," as Connolly wrote, "for the intense stripping process which they carry out"). And the price paid for this feat of purity and concision is precisely the one Connolly named: "certainly perfection has a bleaching, death-wishful quality."

That "death-wishful quality" abounds in these stories, especially in the best of them, of which the very best is the first, entitled, appropriately, "Murderers," in which some boys risk the dangers of a precarious climb to the roof of a house in order to spy on a young rabbi and his wife in their daily ritual of ecstatic love-making. One of the boys, in a fit of voyeuristic transport, loses his footing and plunges to his death ("Arnold's ring hooked a nailhead and the ring and ring finger remained. The hand, the arm, the rest of him, were gone"). "Murderers" too is a miniature, but an unforgettable one.

At the center of this book, however, is a ten-page chronicle or memoir—it can hardly be called a story—that does much to explain the insufficiency of all this art. Called "In the Fifties," it is a catalogue of the author's experience in his decade of coming-of-age, and like everything Mr. Michaels writes, it is at once extremely vivid and extremely bleak. It touches, but never more than touches, on personal encounters, books read, political events, drugs, sex, jobs, literary aspirations, and school. Especially school: "I went to school —NYU, Michigan, and Berkeley—much of the time. . . . I read literary reviews the way people suck candy. . . . I was a teaching assistant in two English departments. . . . I took classes in comparative anatomy and chemistry. I took classes in Old English, Middle English, and modern literature. I took classes and classes. . . . I wrote literary essays in the turgid, tumescent manner of darkest Blackmur. . . .", etc. Somehow everything else in this memoir, even the most intense personal experience, is dwarfed by the recurrent evocation of the academic jailhouse, and the thought dawns that Mr. Michaels, though vastly gifted, has little or nothing but this academic experience to write about. That impulse toward the miniaturization of experience is less an aesthetic option than a moral necessity. Style *is* the object in this woefully constricted *oeuvre* because no other object is obtainable. The collision of ego and artifice must serve, perforce, in lieu of the world "out there."

IN *Cockpit*, there is a scene in which Tarden visits a tailor in Florence in order to have some military uniforms made to his specifications." 'You must be an actor,' he [the tailor] exclaimed. 'And these uniforms are for a play or a film?' " To which Tarden replies: "No, I am not an actor. A one-man theater, more likely." More likely, indeed. For these fictions by Kosinski and Michaels are a form of one-man theater in which the author enacts and reenacts the lonely rituals of his hermetic isolation.

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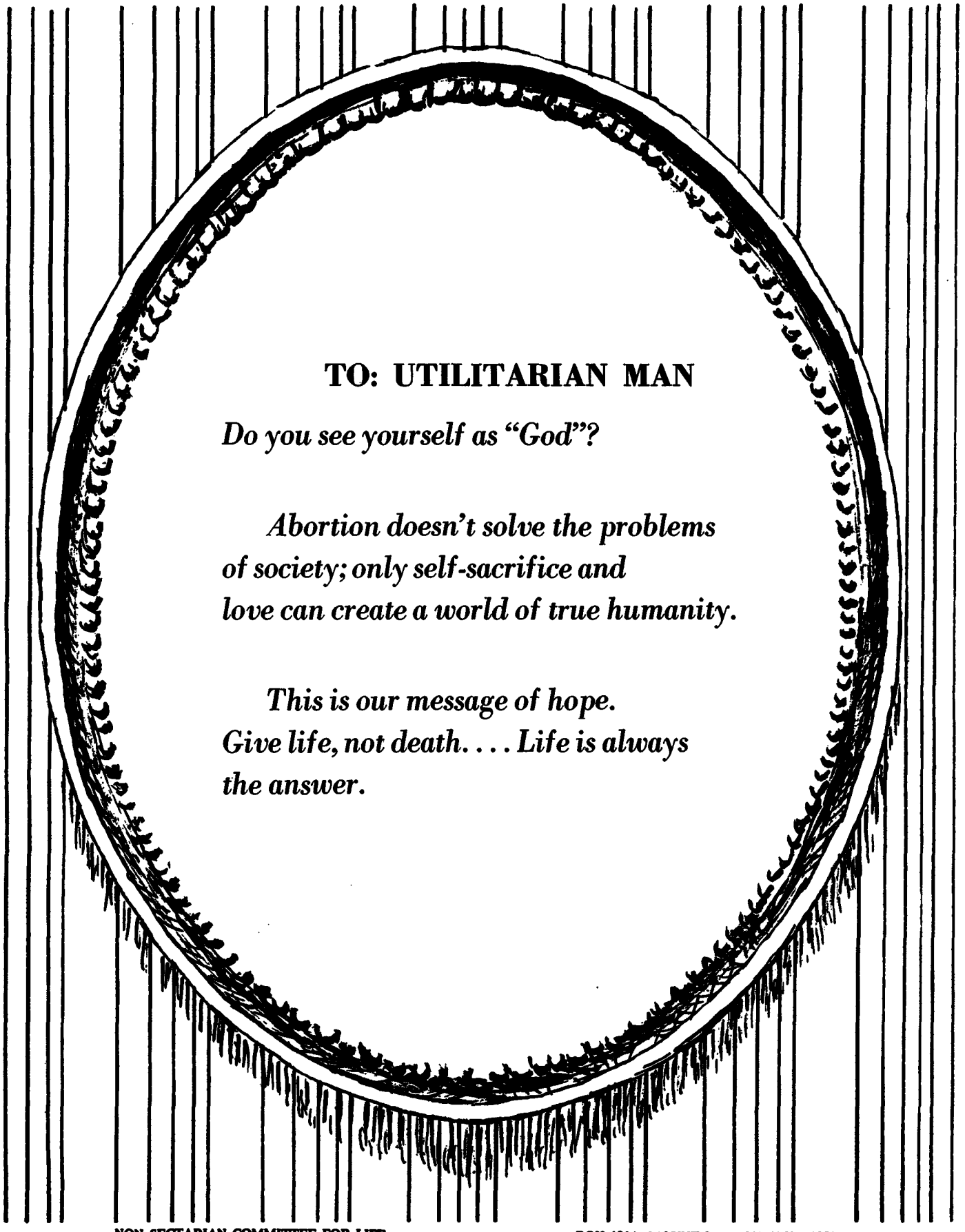

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Books in Review

Intellectual Royalist

MONEY: WHENCE IT CAME, WHERE IT WENT. By JOHN KENNETH GALBRAITH. *Houghton-Mifflin. 312 pp. $10.00.*

Reviewed by THOMAS SOWELL

FOR ALL his sophisticated wit and parade of scholarly erudition—enlivened by lovingly detailed anecdotes—John Kenneth Galbraith is fundamentally as anti-intellectual as any ungrammatical Archie Bunker. From his earlier books on "countervailing power" and "affluence" to his present *Money*, Galbraith argues by assertion, insinuation, and elegant cheap shots at those who disagree with him. It may be good entertainment, but show business is not economics.

For about 200 of the 312 pages of this book, Galbraith meanders through a selective history of money in the Western world. It is hard to see where the tour is going, but the scenery is nice and the guide calls our attention to various points of interest. Then suddenly there is what Galbraith calls "The Coming of J. M. Keynes," and the grand design of the book falls into place. Throughout history the story of money has been the story of knaves and fools, but now the Truth has been seen.

What is the Keynesian truth for which all the earlier monetary history of the world was only a preamble? According to Galbraith, Keynesian theory and history both demonstrate that controlling the money supply does not control aggregate demand, and therefore cannot restore full employment after a depression. The Keynesian reason is that when the money supply is increased in an effort to spur demand, fearful individuals and institutions may choose to hold the additional money during the depression. Therefore direct *government* spending is necessary to get the money into circulation and restore full employment. Nowhere does Galbraith reveal that this sophomore Keynesianism has been under attack—and generally retreating—over the past thirty years. The reader gets no pros and cons. Instead, he is conned by a pro.

Much of the evidence that expansionary monetary policy is ineffective is based on the Great Depression of the 1930's—when the many zigzags of the Federal Reserve System could hardly be dignified as a policy of any sort. But in Galbraith's argument by straw men, the mistakes and pomposities of the Federal Reserve are made to appear as fatal flaws in the theories of those who believe that changing the money supply changes aggregate demand. No one would guess that Milton Friedman (the chief exponent of the "monetarist" view) has been at least equally critical of the Federal Reserve, and has based that criticism on more solid research than Galbraith's. In short, the one thing on which all sides are agreed is that the Federal Reserve has blundered on a staggering scale. It is not an issue in the controversy.

As for the things that are at issue among economists, the jury is still out, and there are modifications on both sides that look suspiciously like plea bargaining. But in the picture that Galbraith presents, there are no real issues. There is only the Keynesian truth and those too blind to acknowledge it. Franklin D. Roosevelt coined the phrase, "economic royalists." There are also intellectual royalists, who rule by decree and give the peasants no reasons, but only the time-honored "bread and circuses." Galbraith omits the bread.

Perhaps the most courageous—or brazen—position taken by Galbraith is in defense of government price-fixing. He not only pronounces World War II price-fixing right and good, but even defends the National Recovery Administration of the early New Deal. His defense of NRA may be unique among economists. The NRA theory was that the general price level could be raised by raising individual prices, industry by industry. This ignores the role of the money supply. If prices are forced up on products A, B, and C, then clearly there will be less money left to spend on products X, Y, and Z, which will then have correspondingly lower prices than otherwise, because of a lower demand. So while *individual* prices can be forced up (or down) by price-fixing, the general price level rises and falls as the money supply rises and falls.

Price-fixing during World War II was in the opposite direction—trying to keep prices down while the money supply rose. These controls were "highly effective" according to Galbraith. His evidence? The official price index did not rise much during World War II. That is, the prices officially reported to the government did not rise much during a time when it was a federal crime to raise prices. The black markets and quality deteriorations of the period are mere "legend," according to Galbraith, though those of us who lived through it may remember it quite differently. Galbraith also glides smoothly over the horrendous *shortages* resulting from price-fixing which often reduced the "official" price to a hypothetical number showing what you *would* pay if you could actually get butter, steak, or housing. Of course, if you were serious about getting those things, you paid a lot more—and neither you nor the seller reported *those* prices to the government.

As in all the Galbraith books of the past quarter of a century, it is not supply and demand that determine prices but something called "power." This "power" can be as specific as needed for purposes of illustration, and as nebulous as required to escape confrontation with facts to the contrary. For example, Galbraith makes a dichotomy between "the corporate and the competitive sectors" of the economy. In the non-competitive

THOMAS SOWELL is *professor of economics at the University of California at Los Angeles and is the author of, among other works,* Race and Economics.

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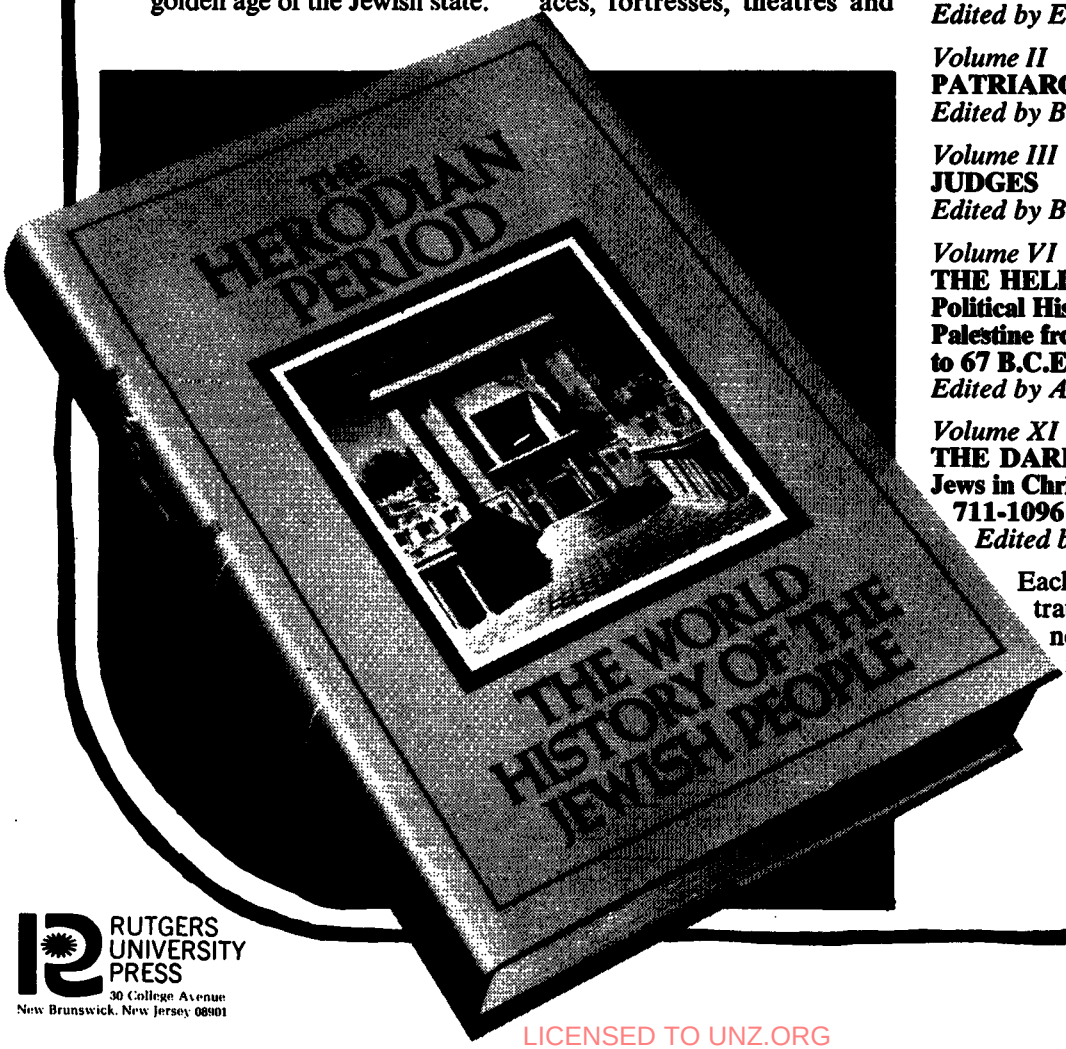

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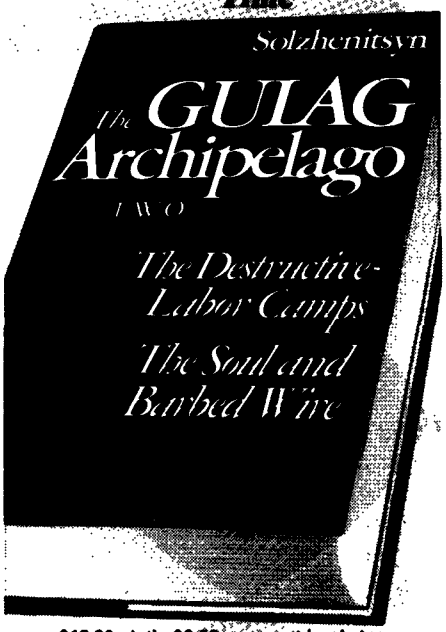

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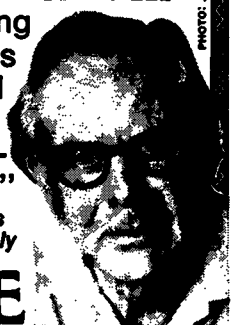

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"corporate" sectors prices are set or "administered" above their competitive levels through "power," in defiance of supply and demand, and this is "pervasive in the American economy." His evidence? It is "not seriously subject to debate." Certainly Galbraith does not seriously debate it—or anything else. But if we stop and think of huge corporations like Sears, Montgomery Ward, and other retail chains, we realize that they are hardly administering prices above the competitive levels, and in fact they are more typically shaving a few cents off here and there as a result of the economies of large-scale operations and the principle that a large volume produces more profits than high mark-ups.

But if we stop and think, Galbraith's whole game will be over. The name of that game is power to the Galbraiths of the world, to direct our lives in the way that he helped direct the price controls of World War II which he now pronounces "highly effective." The only unifying thread running through Galbraith's Keynesianism, market-"power" assertions, and "affluent-society" wastefulness theories is that we would all be better off to abdicate our tastes and preferences—and the market mechanisms through which they are expressed—in favor of the higher values and superior wisdom of the beautiful people, like Galbraith. From this perspective, it is only consistent that he does not bother to present serious evidence that would allow us to judge for ourselves.

Wars of a Poet

JOURNEY TO THE TRENCHES: THE LIFE OF ISAAC ROSENBERG 1890-1918. By JOSEPH COHEN. *Basic Books. 224 pp. $12.50.*

Reviewed by DAVID STERN

THIS biography of Isaac Rosenberg comes in the midst of a sudden revival of interest in the young English poet who died in World War I at the age of twenty-seven. To the extent that he is today remembered at all, Rosenberg is best known for a few of his trench poems, like "Break of Day in the Trenches" and "Returning, We Hear the Larks," and as one of that group of young English poets, including Rupert Brooke and Wilfred Owen, who found the occasion for both their poetic careers and their early deaths in the war. Like Owen especially, Rosenberg possessed a genuine, highly idiosyncratic poetic gift, though it was also one which, judging by all but his very last poems, he never lived long enough to perfect or realize fully.

Of the English war poets, Rosenberg has always remained the most obscure and least understood, partly because of the incomplete state in which much of his best work was left at the time of his death, and partly because even his best poems seem almost to have resisted a wider audience: they are highly abstract, often tortuously expressed, and difficult to classify, belonging neither among the suburban garden plots of the Georgian poets, whom Rosenberg surpassed early in his career, nor within any of the several traditions of the English modernists, like Pound and Eliot, whose more metaphysical poetry he opposed with his own brand of titanic romanticism. During his lifetime, Rosenberg had virtually no success in gaining recognition for his poems—the two slim volumes which he published at his own expense vanished without notice—and since his death, despite the efforts of several eminent critics, his reputation has continued to languish. Now, through an inexplicable coincidence—the simultaneous publication of three books and a spate of articles about him—Rosenberg is being re-"discovered."

Joseph Cohen's biography, the first to be written of this poet, provides a convincing, exhaustively researched account of Rosenberg's life, marred only partially by the author's proclivity for uncorroborated psychological speculation and for "biographical" readings of the poems which end up, like most such attempts, by trivializing their subjects more than they illuminate

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DAVID STERN, *who reviewed* After Babel *by George Steiner in last month's issue, is a teaching fellow at Harvard.*

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them. The most appealing feature of the book is its "deep and abiding feeling" for Rosenberg: although Cohen never really succeeds in demonstrating convincingly his belief that Rosenberg was "a signal voice of the 20th century," his modest, quiet dedication to his subject serves as a fitting tribute to a poet who wrested his achievement, however imperfect, from circumstances of almost impossible adversity.

ROSENBERG was born in 1890, the child of impoverished, unhappily married Russian-Jewish immigrants, and grew up in the worst slums of London's Whitechapel. For the most part, his life was poor, dreary, and grimly ordinary; hardly a single event stands out as memorable. Although young Isaac showed precocious literary and artistic talent, he was forced to leave school at the age of fourteen in order to work as an apprentice in a dingy art-engraving firm; later, through the generosity of three wealthy Jewish women, he was able to study painting at the Slade School, where he learned mainly that his real genius did not lie in art, though both the training and exposure to the reigning literary and aesthetic ideologies which he received there influenced his early poems, especially their use of colorful imagery. Still, Rosenberg's years at the Slade were hardly happy ones. When he was not being oppressed by overwhelming poverty—"the fiendish mangling machine," as he once called it—there were bouts of poor health and depression, and a surfeit of self-pity. Even within the circle of his friends and patrons—many of whom were or would later become established figures in the English literary and artistic world, though they are today even more completely forgotten than Rosenberg himself—he always remained alone, socially awkward, and, as he once described himself in an autobiographical story, "super-self-conscious." He had in addition, according to Dr. Cohen's researches, about as little sexual experience as ever a young poet engaged in writing so much erotic verse could possibly have possessed.

In 1915, Rosenberg enlisted in the British army. Since he was a

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confirmed pacifist, and considered enlistment "the most criminal thing a man can do," the precise reasons for his decision to enlist remain unclear: the prospect of the small but steady military pay undoubtedly attracted him as did, perhaps, the chance for a physical and spiritual rejuvenation. Once in the army, however, Rosenberg found only a more extreme, grimmer version of his life before he had joined up. Placed in a special unit called the "Bantams"—composed of recruits who were either physically, psychologically, or morally substandard—Rosenberg suffered all the daily horrors of army regimen and, also, for the first time in his life, the petty humiliations of anti-Semitism. Rosenberg's consistent "bad luck" did not end even with his death on the Western Front in 1918: owing to the haste of its retreat before the German offensive, the British army was unable to notify Rosenberg's family of the exact circumstances of his death. Not until eight years after the war ended was the location of his grave determined, and even today his body probably does not rest under the tombstone which bears his name.

For all the war poets, World War I opened up a new order of human reality. These poets, Rosenberg among them, were among the first to perceive the essential difference of World War I from all the human disasters that had preceded it—the absoluteness of its sham, waste, and tyranny. Yet Rosenberg was not a war poet in the same way as the others. The privation and duress which he encountered in the trenches were not, after all, experiences entirely unknown to him, as they were for his more genteel fellow poets, and to a great extent the themes and imagery of Rosenberg's trench poems are simply further explorations and more accomplished expressions of themes and images which he had discovered long before his enlistment. Where the other war poets literally *found* their poems in the slaughter, it would be more accurate to say of Rosenberg that he rescued his *from* it.

Yet if the war did not really alter the shape of Rosenberg's imagination, it nevertheless disciplined the excesses of his earlier work, made his language leaner and tougher, and enabled him finally to write a few truly remarkable poems. The essential effort of these poems is to resist the violence and mass destructiveness of the war, to derive some universality out of the carnage. Rosenberg never quite possessed the distance or the ease with language to master the war's brutality through irony; "Break of Day in the Trenches," with its ironic apostrophe to the "cosmopolitan" rat crossing the no-man's-land between the German and English lines, though perhaps his best known poem, is also actually his least typical one. What he was best at was staring down the violence in images of concrete, immediate detail, yet without yielding to sentimentality or pity, as in these lines from "Dead Man's Dump":

A man's brains splattered on
A stretcher-bearer's face;
His shook shoulders slipped
their load,
But when they bent to look
again
The drowning soul was sunk too
deep
For human tenderness.

They left this dead with the
older dead
Stretched at the cross-roads.

Through the movement from the single, private death to the "older dead," who are all made to participate symbolically in the fate of the individual, Rosenberg manages to impart a meaning and weight to the countless anonymous deaths which he witnessed from the trenches—and ultimately, to the equally anonymous death which he anticipated for himself.

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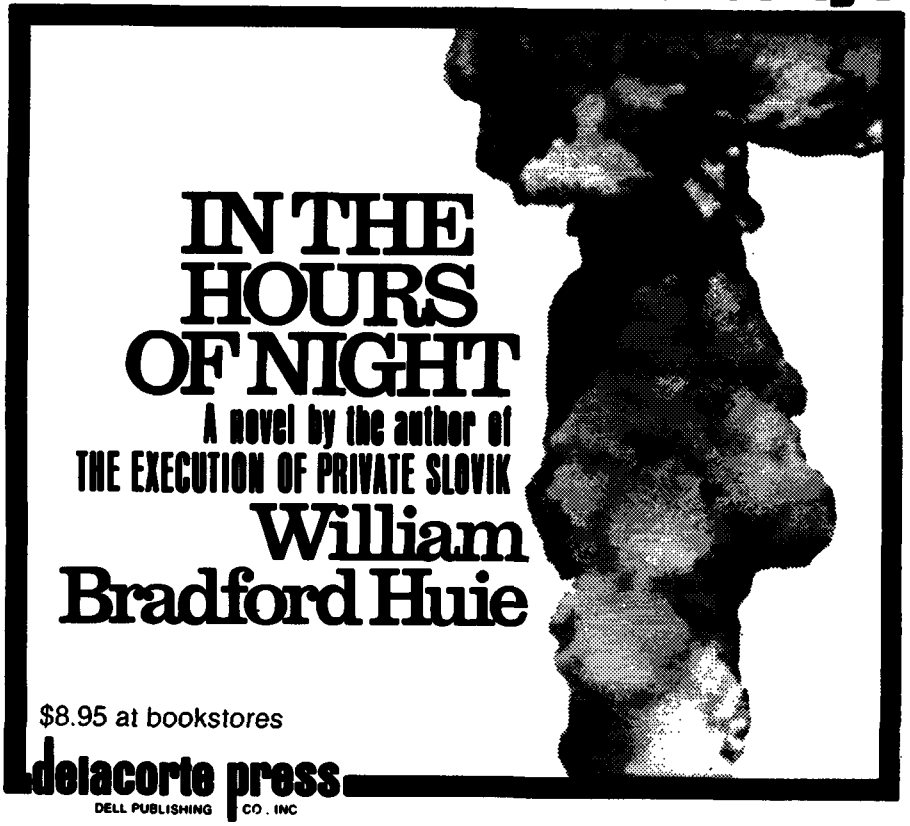
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of the war came, however, not in a war poem but in a number of poems which derive their subjects from Jewish sources—in the verse-play "Moses," in which the biblical figure is utilized to achieve a moral definition of self-consciousness, and in his very last poems, including the highly accomplished and moving "Through These Pale Cold Days," which show just how completely Rosenberg was beginning to find a moral center for himself in his Jewish heritage. As some critics have noted, Rosenberg was one of the few English Jewish poets to draw seriously on the stories and language of the biblical tradition, at the same time investing them with a mood and imagery so decidedly unbiblical that the result is quite unlike anything to be found either in Hebrew or in English literature.

ROSENBERG was in the process of applying for a transfer to Vladimir Jabotinsky's Jewish Battalion, which was then campaigning in Palestine and Egypt, when he was killed, leaving the question both of his transfer and of the future development of his poetry unresolved. And yet, nothing about Rosenberg is resolved: the first impression which his poetry gives is one of startling unevenness—he was equally capable of writing the most inspired verses and the most bathetic ones and would often botch a good poem with an unexpected banality or period commonplace; virtually all of his poems are lethally marred in one way or another. But it is also difficult to be purely objective about Rosenberg: his obvious talent, the unfortunate circumstances of his life and death, all the *schlemiel*-like qualities which seem to have pursued him from birth like some malevolent fate also make him an utterly sympathetic figure, and one peculiarly able to provoke a sentimentality in his admirers—his present biographer included—which he himself studiously avoided. Through his few poems, Rosenberg survives, but just barely—a victim of the adversity he himself resisted, overshadowed finally by other men who were not necessarily better poets than he, just luckier ones.

Election Spending

POLITICAL MONEY: A STRATEGY FOR CAMPAIGN FINANCING IN AMERICA. By DAVID W. ADAMANY and GEORGE E. AGREE. *Johns Hopkins. 242 pp. $11.95.*

SYMPOSIUM ON CAMPAIGN FINANCING REGULATION. *American Bar Association. 148 pp. $5.00.*

Reviewed by MICHAEL J. MALBIN

THE campaign-finance law signed by President Ford a year ago deals on its surface with the way people spend money on politics. Its effects, however, are likely to reverberate through all the elements making up the basic structure of elections. The law already is changing the shape of presidential politics: the style of campaigning, the structure of campaign organizations, the types of candidates most likely to succeed, and the relative importance of different interest groups—all are affected by the rules telling people how to spend their political money.

The law's impact will be felt beyond presidential campaigning as well. Public financing for candidates, contribution limits, and spending limits will have a direct bearing on the future role of the political parties, and may also affect the relationship between the President and Congress. Differences between federal and state law already are transforming the relationship between state parties and candidates for federal office, and the possibility exists of future impact on the relations between the two levels of government as a whole.

Unfortunately, none of these issues seems to have been discussed during the two-year-long congressional debate over campaign financing; the forum where some of them are now being raised is the U.S.

MICHAEL J. MALBIN, *a political correspondent for* National Journal, *reviewed Kevin Phillips's* Mediacracy *in the July* COMMENTARY.

The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination
Lawrence L. Langer

Confronted with the unspeakable, the literary artist must yet find a voice. This profoundly understanding book analyzes the imaginative works of writers on the Holocaust—Elie Wiesel, Jerzy Kosinski, Jakov Lind, Heinrich Böll, and others—to show how unmitigated horror has been transmuted into art.

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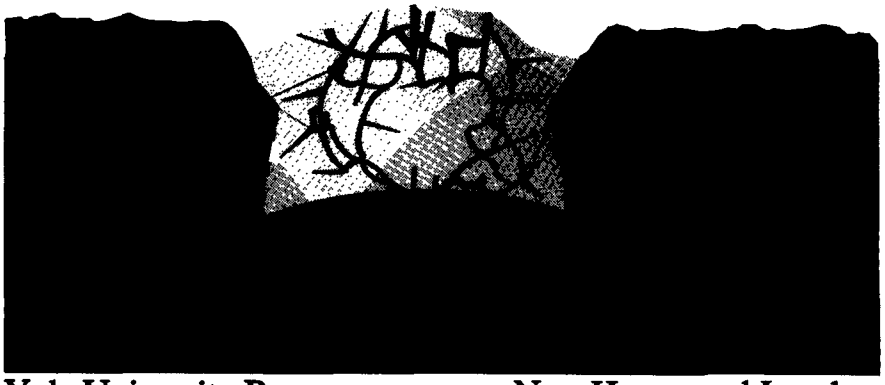

Yale University Press New Haven and London

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Supreme Court, which is expected to rule on the law's constitutionality before January 1. Although the two books under review do not answer every relevant question, they do have the merit of considering the long-range impact of campaign-finance regulation, and as a result they should do more to stimulate thought on the important issues than all the congressional debates combined.

Political Money, a study sponsored by the Twentieth Century Fund, is primarily an argument for a system of public campaign financing different from the method embodied either in the federal law or in the ten states that already have public campaign-financing schemes. The authors maintain that the key goals of campaign regulation should be: to reduce the political effect of the unequal national distribution of wealth; to provide enough money to insure well-financed opposition to incumbents, most of whom are becoming increasingly safe bets for reelection; to free candidates from the pressure that comes from being excessively beholden to a few large givers; to help prevent corruption and reduce the level of public cynicism about corruption; finally, to do all this in a way that will not upset the existing relationships between parties and candidates, or among the different levels of government.

Adamany and Agree say that the present law, with its contribution limits, goes part way toward satisfying the need to equalize the influence of citizens on politics. They would go further, however, by reducing the $1000 contribution limit to $100. They do not advocate limits on campaign spending; the present law, in its constitutionally least defensible sections, does require such limits.

The public-financing plan Adamany and Agree propose is intended to enhance equality in a general election. All citizens would have vouchers that could be given to the candidate of their choice. During the nomination period, instead of vouchers there would be a system of matching grants (the authors think too few people would turn in vouchers during this period to help the candidates). By using an index of present support to determine how much each candidate should get, both methods would avoid discriminating against independents and new minor parties, as the federal law now does. To help counter the possibility that public financing of candidates will weaken the parties, Adamany and Agree would give direct proportional grants to parties as well as to candidates. In addition, to prevent any upset of the delicate system of checks and balances, they say that any federal financing system should include both presidential and congressional candidates.

The basic approach *Political Money* takes toward campaign financing has much to recommend it, particularly in its concern for checks and balances and for preserving the parties. Its most serious weakness is the $100 lid on contributions, which only exacerbates the problem the present law created for little-known candidates who need seed money to get started. The authors seem to have let their concern for equality get the better of them, to the detriment of another of their goals—fostering competitiveness. In conversation after the book was published, Agree has said he would favor omitting the contribution limits until a candidate reached a reasonable threshold amount. With this modification, the ideas in *Political Money* merit serious consideration, if Congress ever gets a second crack at the subject.

The American Bar Association's symposium is an even more impressive reminder than *Political Money* of what the level of debate should be on public issues. The ABA's Special Committee on Election Reform called together a distinguished panel of political experts to discuss the implications of the new law, and the transcripts of their discussions contain some of the most stimulating observations about the problems of campaign-finance regulation in print anywhere. It is unfortunately impossible to summarize all of the interesting exchanges, but the ABA would be doing a real service if it prefaced the book with an introduction explaining the law to the general reader and then circulated it through bookstores—it is currently available only by direct order.

IT REMAINS to be seen whether the Supreme Court will look at some of the broader issues raised by these books, or whether it will let the pressure of time rush it into accepting Congress's judgment uncritically. If the justices take the time to study the legislative record, and then compare it to such books as *Political Money* and the ABA symposium transcript, they will soon discover that many of the key issues were never addressed by Congress.

Thus, everyone agrees that the *spending* limit imposed by the 1974 law cuts into a candidate's ability to speak. The law's defenders say that the limit is needed to reduce the candidate's desire to solicit high contributions, but this seems to be, at best, a roundabout reason, and possibly insufficient to justify the indirect limitation on speech involved. Here a constitutional issue, one of free speech, intersects with a political one, as a law intended to prevent discrimination may be seen to have a chilling effect in practice. The Court should not lightly go into such political questions, but this is an area where it has no real choice.

As for limits on *contributions* to election campaigns, it is clear that what Congress is trying to stop is the undue influence large contributors sometimes have on officeholders. But how widespread *is* the problem of undue influence? If we are talking about no more than a few thousand large contributors, as has been suggested, would it not be possible to handle the situation in a less elaborate manner—for example, effective public disclosure combined with vigorous law enforcement either by the Attorney General or by an independent prosecutor?

The initial evidence, moreover, seems to indicate that candidates who are not widely known, who are trying to present an unpopular or newly emerging point of view, or who represent a poor constituency, are hurt far more seriously by the contribution limits than are incumbents or mainstream candidates. Campaigns cannot begin in a serious way without "seed money,"

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and even a candidate who intends to rely primarily on small contributions must either be an incumbent, or begin with a few large gifts to cover the cost of initial solicitations, or be sufficiently well-known to raise money with one newspaper advertisement. The rich can get around this problem, since under the law a person can contribute enough to his own campaign to get it past the critical point.

Under the old system, someone like Julian Bond in his abortive 1975 presidential bid would have been allowed to borrow enough for at least one attempt to raise money by mail. If the mailing did not work, the loan would have given him a chance to find out. Under the 1974 law it is illegal to begin with a large loan. Here a constitutional issue arises. Do the First and Fifth Amendments permit a law that so clearly favors rich people, media stars, and incumbents?

Finally, one provision in the law makes it illegal for people acting on their own to spend more than $1000 on behalf of or against a candidate. These "independent expenditures" are distinguished from "contributions" which are gifts to a candidate's political committee and used as the candidate sees fit. Independent expenditures include such things as buying a billboard without consulting anybody. The justification for this remarkable limitation on independent activity is that without it, the law would contain a massive loophole that would make spending and contribution limits meaningless. That may be true. But is it really constitutional, in the name of closing a loophole, to prohibit a citizen from spending the more-than-$1000 it would take to sponsor a book or buy a newspaper advertisement that would tell why he opposes the President's re-election?

THESE issues are all fundamental. In each case, the Court must ask whether a particular item in the law is the least intrusive way to achieve a legitimate goal, when achieving it affects political speech. In each case, the means Congress has already selected toward its end seem questionable. Unfortunately, if past history is any guide, the Court may indeed end up accepting the dubious judgment of Congress. The post-World War II Court is often regarded as one that has stood foursquare against the legislature in defense of civil liberties, but the fact is that almost all the laws declared unconstitutional by the Court since 1937 have been state laws; only the law lowering the voting age in 1970, and before that the 1964 ruling allowing Communists to hold passports, come to mind as cases in which the Court overturned acts of Congress, and neither decision was one likely to provoke a confrontation between the two branches. One may hope that the present case will prove an exception to this post-1937 record; it offers the Court a particularly welcome opportunity to correct the irresponsibility of reformers who may have wanted to do good but who failed to think through the full consequences of their actions.

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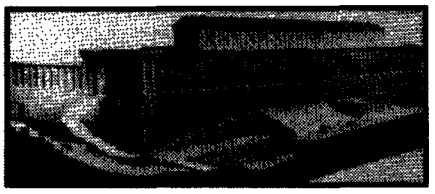

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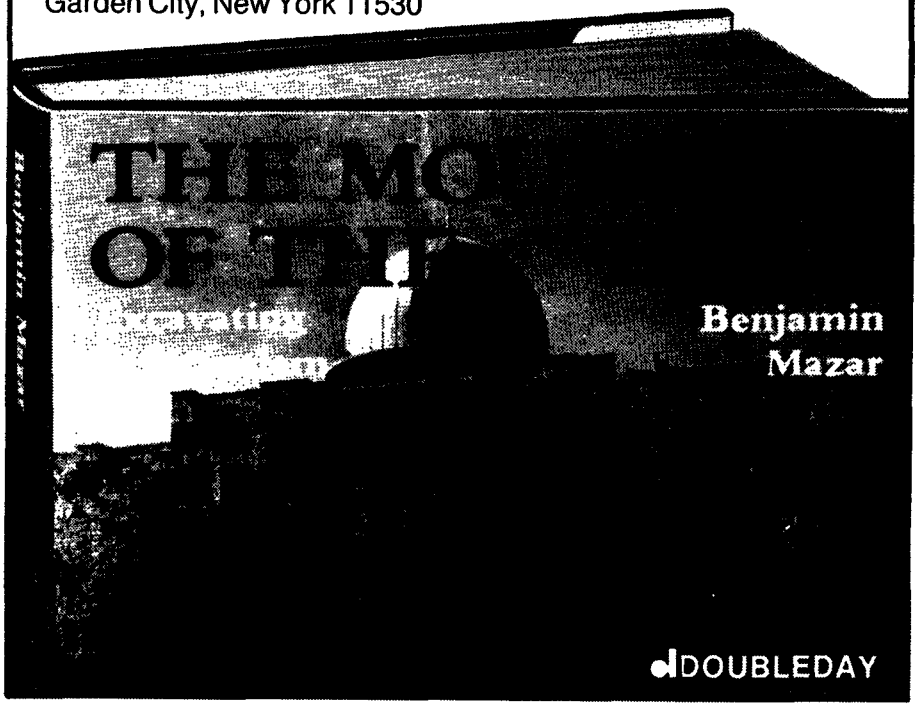

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From Palmach to Zahal

THE ISRAELI ARMY. By EDWARD LUTTWAK and DAN HOROWITZ. *Harper & Row. 461 pp. $15.00.*

Reviewed by JOSEPH SHATTAN

ONE of the most widely held myths about the Arab-Israeli conflict has it that the Israeli army owes its superiority to its technological expertise which, in turn, is a function of Israel's Western orientation. In fact, as Edward Luttwak and Dan Horowitz show in their excellent study of the Israeli army, Israel has won all its wars despite a "technology gap" that has always favored its Arab opponents. Indeed, from a military point of view, the central paradox of the Arab-Israeli conflict may well be that the Israeli army, while more capable of absorbing highly advanced weapons systems, has almost always rejected the technological "high road" in favor of an operational doctrine emphasizing personal initiative and group morale, while the far less technologically capable Arab armies have based their operational doctrines on the acquisition and absorption of the most advanced weapons systems obtainable. To explain how this seemingly anomalous situation has come about, Luttwak and Horowitz have done much more than write a conventional military history of the Israeli army; it is the great merit of their work that it places military doctrines and struggles in their proper political and social contexts.

The first Jewish self-defense force in Palestine, Hashomer (The Watchman), was founded by elements in the Labor-Zionist movement in 1909 to protect Jewish villages from the robberies, Bedouin raids, and other acts of lawlessness fairly common throughout the declining Ottoman Empire. Most Jewish farmers, however, refused to have anything to do with Hashomer, whose members affected the outlandish garb and mannerisms of the desert warriors. By the end of 1920, the Labor-Zionist trade-union federation, Histadrut, supplanted Hashomer with a country-wide militia, the Haganah. Closely supervised by the political parties of the *Yishuv* (Jewish Palestine), whose main preoccupations were ideological rather than military, the Haganah failed for a long time to develop into a cohesive fighting force with a distinctive *esprit de corps*. It was not until 1941, when Rommel's North African offensive reached the gates of Egypt and threatened the very existence of the *Yishuv*, that the leadership of the Haganah decided to raise a mobile force of full-time soldiers, the Palmach.

Fundamentally, the Palmach strove to imbue its fighters with a sense of ideological commitment which expressed itself in terms of personal initiative, even at the lowest level of command, and group solidarity. As Luttwak and Horowitz observe, "Instead of 'breaking' civilians in order to turn them into soldiers, Palmach training allowed maximum scope for personal initiative: in the words of its slogan, 'The smallest unit is the single man with his rifle.' Embodied in the method of the 'follow me' command order, it was Palmach doctrine that officers should 'pull' their men after them instead of 'pushing' their men forward by direct order." After Israel emerged as an independent state in May 1948, only to be invaded by the armed forces of five Arab states, the Palmach provided the Army of Independence with its officer corps, its military doctrines, its crack fighting units, and its heroes.

The officers of the Palmach, and, later, the Army of Independence, shared a common social background as well as a common ideology. Nearly all of them were the sons of the political elite of the *Yishuv*. Socialized to leadership from childhood, imbued with the Labor-Zionist values of self-reliance and service to the community, Palmach officers constituted a highly-politicized, self-conscious elite. But Israel's political authorities would not tolerate a military aristocracy-in-embryo, even one whose orientation was anything but militaristic. In 1949, against tremendous opposition, David Ben-Gurion disbanded the special Palmach units in the Israeli army and, along with Yigal Yadin, the new Chief of Staff, set out to rebuild the army from scratch.

Ben-Gurion and Yadin insisted that the camaraderie, informality, and "internal" discipline of the Palmach be replaced with British spit-and-polish. Yadin introduced a number of far-reaching structural innovations which have since become permanent cornerstones of Israel's military establishment. The reserve forces, in most armies a mere appendage to the standing forces, were assigned the main combat role, so that the chief peacetime function of the standing army became to provide a steady stream of trained men for the army's reserve units. Some of Yadin's innovations were not successful. To conserve the army's rapidly dwindling stock of highly-qualified officers, Yadin introduced a number of incentives, aimed at widening the social gap between officers and men. If Yadin thought that through such social engineering he could maintain the army's élan and persuade talented young men to pursue a military career, he was sadly mistaken. By 1953, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF—in Hebrew, Zahal) had become a parade-grounds army, capable of executing complicated military maneuvers as training exercises but incapable of performance under fire. The morale and many of the skills of the Army of Independence were lost.

Zahal's second Chief of Staff, Mordechai Makleff, was thus faced with two problems. His immediate task was to restore a certain level of efficiency. More importantly, he had to renew the army's fighting spirit without, however, politicizing it along Palmach lines. Makleff's solution was to set up a special unit of paratroopers outside the regular framework of the army which would serve as an example for the rest of the army to follow. Virtually a private army, this elite unit was led by a young man named Ariel Sharon, who personally selected all its members. Gradually, the raw

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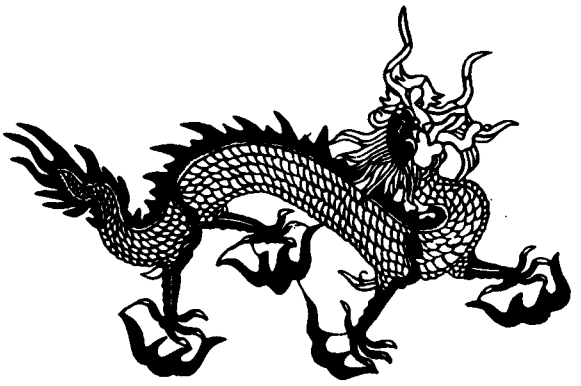
fighting spirit of the paratroopers penetrated the entire army, and during the tenure of Zahal's third Chief of Staff, Moshe Dayan, Zahal's "external" discipline was relaxed and a much more free-wheeling approach was adopted.

The Israeli army, according to Luttwak and Horowitz, is more Dayan's creation than Yadin's. It was under Dayan that the army's operational doctrine was crystallized. This doctrine avoids binding plans and gives local commanders maximum tactical initiative. Officers' training emphasizes flexibility. Typically, a budding young officer is told to prepare a detailed plan for an attack on a certain objective and, when he is ready to present it, is informed that the situation has changed drastically and that he must improvise new orders immediately. As one standard Israeli army slogan has it, all battleplans are "merely a basis for change."

By 1967, Zahal had evolved into something of a cross between the early Palmach and the spit-and-polish army sought by Ben-Gurion, and it combined many of the best features of both. About 30 per cent of Zahal's officer corps came from the kibbutzim and moshavim, and these youths—brought up in small, cohesive groups where status competition is intense—provided the army with extremely high standards of leadership and personal sacrifice. Israel's reserve system, meanwhile, prevented the ossification of military doctrine into dogma by constantly exposing soldiers to civilians and civilians to soldiers. Zahal's sixth Chief of Staff, Yitzhak Rabin, introduced modern management techniques into the army without depriving it of its fighting spirit, and he supervised its mechanization as well. But the great question debated by Israeli military experts during this period was whether or not Zahal's operational doctrine, based as it was on the "human element," had been rendered obsolete by the increasing technological sophistication of the Arab armies.

There were two schools of thought in this debate. One school argued that the defects in the Arabs' military performance re-



CHINA'S IMPERIAL PAST

CHARLES O. HUCKER

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flected a more fundamental social malaise: the inability of different social strata in Arab society to cooperate effectively. Thus, when drafted into the army, an Egyptian peasant, who rightly regards the landlord and the tax collector as his traditional enemies, tends to perceive his officer as simply another landlord in disguise, to be bribed or obeyed as the occasion warrants, but never to be followed. An ordinary Israeli soldier, on the other hand, is prepared to take substantial risks because he knows for a certainty that his "buddies" won't let him down should he need their help, and an Israeli officer knows that when he gives the order, "Follow me!," his men will follow him wholeheartedly. These social bonds, rather than any particular level of technological expertise, are what give the Israeli army its unique character.

The other school of thought argued that the advanced and, in some cases, virtually automatic weapons systems which the Arabs had received from Moscow compensated them, in a sense, for their lack of social cohesion. Given enough training, even a peasant can learn to operate a "Sagger" anti-tank missile or a Sam-7 anti-aircraft missile. This school of thought feared that Zahal's qualitative superiority over the Arab armies, which rested on the more efficient use of its manpower, would gradually be eroded by sophisticated Soviet technology. The near-collapse of the Arab armies in the 1967 Six-Day War proved these fears to be groundless—or so it seemed until October 1973.

As Luttwak and Horowitz make clear, the Egyptian attack of 1973, despite its initial offensive thrust, was from the tactical point of view a defensive, static operation. The Egyptian army, once it attained a foothold on the east bank of the Canal, quickly dug in and refused to move beyond the range of its anti-aircraft complex located on the western bank of the Canal. The Israelis, who had relied on their armored brigades to hurl back any Egyptian crossing of the Canal, were stunned to discover that long-range Egyptian anti-tank missiles could decimate their tank units while situated comfortably out of range of Israeli tank fire. The Israeli air force, meanwhile, preoccupied with holding back the Syrian offensive in the north, could not turn its full attention to the southern front. Besides, its effectiveness was limited by the American refusal to provide it with the sophisticated "electronic countermeasures" necessary to penetrate Egypt's Soviet-supplied air-defense system. Luttwak and Horowitz are critical of Zahal for relying exclusively on its tank corps to repel an Egyptian attack and they argue very persuasively that a "mixed-combat team" would have performed much more effectively. Be that as it may, though, the early Egyptian successes seemed to vindicate those Cassandras in Israel's military establishment who had pointed to the increasingly ominous role of technology even in so-called conventional war.

By the second week of the Yom Kippur War, of course, the military situation had changed drastically. A mixed division of armored and paratroop forces led by Ariel Sharon, "grandmaster of the paratroopers," succeeded in crossing the Canal and, once across, proceeded to wreak havoc in the Egyptian rear. Now, at last, the Israeli army was playing its long suit—its capacity to exploit a fleeting advantage and improvise a battle plan on the spot—and the Egyptian army, suddenly caught off-balance, behaved exactly as it did in 1967: it collapsed.

WHILE Luttwak and Horowitz end their history of the Israeli army with an account of the October War, it is known that since 1973 Israel has finally acquired the complex "electronic countermeasures" from the United States which provide an "answer" to the Soviet air-defense system. But as Luttwak and Horowitz demonstrate throughout their book, the key to Zahal's success has never been its reliance on Western technology. Generally speaking, armies can be organized

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along either liberal or authoritarian principles, on the Athenian or the Spartan paradigm. The Israelis, because of the nature of their society and value-system, have chosen to organize their army along the lines of the Athenian paradigm, while the Arabs, also because of the nature of their society and value-system, have opted for the Spartan paradigm. If it is true that wars have implications that extend beyond the purely military dimension and impinge on wider human concerns, then it may well be the case that the struggle between Zahal and the Arab military juggernaut is not altogether unrelated to the more fundamental conflict between freedom and tyranny.

Music & Mao

STOCKHAUSEN SERVES IMPERIALISM. By CORNELIUS CARDEW. *Latimer New Dimensions (London). 126 pp. £3.00.*

Reviewed by SAMUEL LIPMAN

THE subject of this book—the penetration of music by politics—is not new. It has a disreputable history in our time as an example of the subjection of ideas to state power. What is new about Cornelius Cardew's approach is twofold: his god of action is Mao, not Stalin, and he is a willing, not an enslaved, transformer of art into propaganda. It is, one hopes, still noteworthy when a man offers himself into bondage.

Cardew is a well-known, even notorious, English experimental composer. Now approaching middle age, he was educated at the Royal Academy of Music where he is presently professor of composition. In the late 50's he served as assistant to the German experimental composer, Karlheinz Stockhausen; until the late 60's he was, by his own admission, a follower of both Stockhausen and the American John Cage. He was thus a part of the international musical avant-garde, and as such essentially non-political in his creative work, if not in his social ideas.

In 1969, along with two other English composers, Cardew founded (and himself became the driving force in) the Scratch Orchestra, a group of musicians and non-musicians come together for experimental performance activities. These activities included improvisation, performance of experimental compositions, performance of standard compositions in ways different from the intention of the composers and the tradition of past performances, and performances of Scratch Music.

Although it is difficult to define Scratch Music, because it did not ever achieve a settled form, Cardew's conception of it best conveys the flavor of his pre-Maoist approach to music. Scratch Music is a music of ideas-for-performance, not of sounds meant, as in traditional music, to be heard exactly as notated. It is a music of transient, changeable, impermanent qualities —its first practitioners conceived of it as being written in a scratch book. It is a set of directions for activities which may or may not involve music or even sounds. It is what anyone wants it to be.

The emphasis in the Scratch Orchestra, as can be seen from the idea of Scratch Music, was on voluntarism rather than on the discipline which is the *sine qua non* of traditional ensemble activities. This voluntarism led both to public scandal, consequent on the orchestra's concert behavior, and to internal disintegration amid factionalism and apathy. As of the beginning of 1975 the orchestra had temporarily been saved by several ideologically oriented Maoist participants, of whom Cardew is one. These militants have attempted to direct the orchestra away from aimless experiment and provocation and toward a conscious effort to serve the masses. On its surface, much of Cardew's book is about this attempt.

THE book itself is composed of articles by others as well as by Cardew, although he has supplied all the introductory, explanatory, and connective material. The book begins with a short history of the Scratch Orchestra by Rod Eley, whom Cardew rather portentously describes as "the most educated of us." This is followed with attacks by Cardew on Cage and Stockhausen, an account of a "Critical Concert" in Berlin in 1973 at which Cardew performed avant-garde works and then flayed them on ideological grounds, and finally a chapter of self-criticism in which the composer repudiates his earlier work and attempts to map out a set of goals for a politically desirable music.

The political content of the book is a combination of Marx, Mao, and Marcuse, superficially digested and laboriously regurgitated. We are told endlessly that art and ideas reflect the class basis of the society in which they arise, that the bourgeoisie is decomposing in the face of the historically inevitable victory of the working class, and that the role of culture is to unite with the masses and hasten the revolution. Cardew and his collaborators see the avant-garde as a force attempting to escape the morbid clutches of the bourgeoisie; in their view any support or toleration of avant-garde culture by the establishment is an exercise of repressive tolerance, a killing-by-kindness. The crime of Cage and Stockhausen is that they use their talents to produce music which, because it avoids direct involvement with politically revolutionary subjects and forces, is tolerated by the bourgeoisie even while being rejected as art. Thus the bourgeoisie wins the only victory still open to it—to delay the inevitable by co-opting the forces of change.

Cardew goes further. He attacks on ideological grounds some explicitly revolutionary compositions by two close sympathizers, Christian Wolff and Frederic Rzewski. Wolff's piece, *Accompaniments*, is set to a text taken from Jan Myrdal and Gun Kessle's *China: The Revolution Continued*. The text is a discussion by two Chinese, a veterinarian and a midwife, of the benefits to the people of the New China brought about by the improved sanitation and contraception de-

SAMUEL LIPMAN, *a new contributor, is a concert pianist whose 1975 appearances in New York have included the New York premiere of Elliott Carter's* Piano Concerto *at Carnegie Hall and a performance of Beethoven's Third Piano Concerto at Fisher Hall.*

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veloped in the light of Mao's thought. The music was written rapidly as a response to the text, and consists of simple chords and rhythms to be applied, as is the vocal part, at the discretion of the participants. Cardew criticizes the piece on the grounds that the text is only seemingly about the revolution and its benefits; actually, he says, it is about "pollution and the population explosion, two of the great red herrings (secondary contradictions) that the bourgeoisie has brought out in the last few years to distract people's attention from the principal contradictions, capital and labor."

The two pieces of Frederic Rzewski that come in for political scrutiny are *Coming Together* and *Attica*. *Coming Together* is a setting of a letter written by Sam Melville, a convicted radical bomber who died in the Attica rebellion, about the change in his attitudes and life caused by his imprisonment. The second piece, *Attica*, is based on a quotation of Richard X Clark, one of the leaders of the rebellion. Cardew criticizes these pieces for treating the texts musically in a subjective, fragmented, and repetitive way, so that the words become hypnotic and obsessive, rather than rationally clear. He further objects that the ideology underlying the Melville piece is anarchistic because Melville's consciousness is based on personal, rather than social, desires; therefore the piece appeals more to alienated youth than to the class-conscious proletariat.

IN THUS beating up on his closest comrades-in-arms, Cardew provides us with another example, and that not yet the last, of the revolution devouring its children. Cardew also criticizes himself—for believing that in his compositions, music and art could be autonomous, and that his music could provide a complete, self-enclosed world. He finds that this relic of bourgeois individualism as it separated him from the world also separated his music from the audience. Though he discusses fully the wrong motives musicians have had in the past as well as the motives they ought to have, nowhere does he discuss what an ideal music from his standpoint would mean in terms of notes and sounds—that is, in terms of music. Does he have perhaps in mind the Chinese anthem, *The East is Red*? Or perhaps that product of collective composition, the *Yellow River Concerto*? Has any music been written which would satisfy his political criteria? Cardew seems able only to assist in the destruction of the past and the present, not to help in the construction even of his own future.

The problem, of course, is that he wishes to put culture at the service of politics. This desire, which surfaces at times of cultural and social crisis, remains eternally green in the face of the most shocking enormities perpetrated in its name. One need only point to the atrocities committed upon ideas—and what is worse, on people—whenever politics has taken command in our time. From the repression and liquidation of Soviet writers in the 30's, to the exile and murder of German writers by Hitler, to the extraordinary ravings of Mao's Cultural Revolution, the contemporary man of ideas has become a target for the exercise and abuse of arbitrary power. Ideas have suffered, and their holders have been killed. Cardew is selling a remedy nobody wants for himself. The record is clear; for culture, 20th-century revolutions, whether of the Left or of the Right, have been a curse, not a blessing.

There is a further foolishness in Cardew's argument. He continually invokes the coming revolution of the working class. But where has it come: in the Soviet Union? Is Russia, that land without soviets and unions, controlled by the working class? China? Is not China controlled by yet another group of bureaucrats ruling under the self-proclaimed mandate of heaven? Where is the legitimacy of any of these revolutions? Perhaps Cardew sees the British working class, or the American, as a revolutionary force. But he has no evidence for this pipe dream, and the lack of evidence only makes his voice more isolated and shrill.

WHY, then, since this book is obviously meant as a political tract from beginning to end, does it seem to have so little to do with politics? Because its motivation is so stronly personal, and Cardew so strongly wants to be a musician. His tribute to the music of the 19th century must have been painful indeed to write:

> I believe I speak for the vast majority of music lovers when I say: let's face it, modern music . . . is not half as good as classical music. . . . What does good mean in that sentence? It means effective, wholesome, moving, satisfying, delightful, inspiring, stimulating. . . . By comparison with [what] we . . . derive from Beethoven, Brahms, and the rest, modern music (with very few exceptions) is footling, unwholesome, sensational, frustrating, offensive, and depressing.

It is no fun to be a child of such a parent. His rage and envy in the face of the past comes through clearly in his remarks on Wagner:

> I have never seen a Wagner opera. . . . I . . . know a piano duet version of the Prelude to Act III of *Tristan and Isolde*, and once played in the fifth desk of cellos in a non-professional performance of the same piece. . . . I can hear someone saying, "My lad, if you've reached the ripe age of thirty-six without having learned anything about Wagner, you have only yourself to blame." Well, I think the reason is that virtually everything written and said about Wagner and his music is extremely boring and irrelevant to the present time, and reasonable musicians with a certain amount of work to do could not be expected to plough through it.

Is this a reason for not listening to the music? It seems much more like a rationalization of disappointment too deeply minded to be faced. Cardew laments his own lack of skills:

> . . . I realize that I am not at all qualified to apply technical criteria because in my own period of training I had never mastered anything more than the rudiments. The rest had seemed irrelevant in view of my desire to break with the traditions of tonal music completely. The fact that I was able to pass exams and get

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diplomas despite my extremely limited compositional technique is due entirely to the fatally liberalistic attitude that permeates our education system.

One can only sympathize with his disappointed hopes and his frustrated ambitions.

It is clear that Cardew bitterly misses an audience for his works; he writes movingly of "the composer's bright dreams that wither up and die for lack of audience." The book discusses time and again the loss of audience and the resultant isolation of the artist; indeed, the book seems to represent not so much a case of music supporting a political position as the case of a composer desiring to secure an audience even at the cost of submerging himself in it. It is clear, however, that this is a price Cardew will never be able to pay; not only does he cherish still (though unconsciously) his individuality, but there is also no large enveloping entity on the horizon with which he might negotiate the sale of his soul. Like the devil, revolution in Western society is a myth conjured up to deal with feelings of powerlessness; nobody believes in the revolution, Communists least of all. Cardew, alas, is condemned to freedom.

CARDEW must be credited, though, with accurately describing the three most important elements in the musical crisis of the 20th century. The achievement of the 18th and 19th centuries was overpoweringly strong; music education in our time has become academically fettered and musically slack; and the audience has died. The evidence is easily available. The musical repertory is not expanded by bringing in new or recently written pieces. It is expanded by finding "new" old pieces—forgotten operas of Donizetti or recently completed symphonies of Mahler. Music appreciation is increasingly confined to the dreary classes of our colleges, while music schools, in order to survive economically, try to make themselves relevant by training guitarists and giving courses in Far Eastern music and multi-media events. And the death of the audience is shown not only by the lack of interest in contemporary music, but even more tellingly by the fact, for instance, that both the New York Philharmonic and the Metropolitan Opera must advertise at enormous cost in order to recruit ticket buyers. The story is the same with the sale of classical records as with attendance at recitals.

The effect of all this on the creative musician has been disastrous. He cannot escape the shadow of the great masters; but his society will not allow him to rest content with being derivative. He does not starve; teaching jobs keep the wolf from the door. And there is the direct philanthropy of our governments and foundations, who will pay him if he does what they desire. But for whom does he write? Who listens? Who cares? Nobody. Not here in America, not in Europe, and not in Russia or China save when the masses are told they must. Writing music is like falling in love. One has to have someone with whom to do it.

THE saving grace of this book, and of Cardew in general, is a certain wit, a faint suggestion of the sainted Stephen Potter, the renowned gamesman who taught us all how the athletically untalented might win at sports. Potter, behind the façade he so humorously presented of small-time cunning and bumbling trickery, was a spokesman for all those born against their will into a world of the taller and the more handsome, the richer and the quicker. This is an attractive and typically English attitude of resisting the big battalions of strength and talent by purity of desire, if not of motive. Cardew's political cause is not mine, but his musical cause may very well be. And in any case, how does one reject a man who can write, "Though Cage and Stockhausen have no hold on the working class, they did have a strong hold on me . . ."? Just think—all those millions of brawny workers and Cardew's tenderest feelings marching toward the sunrise as equals. Any gamesman will recognize the triumph.

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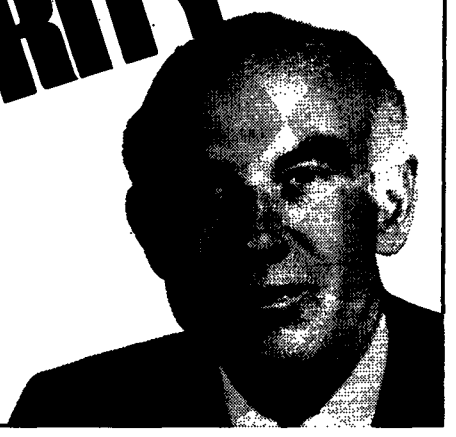

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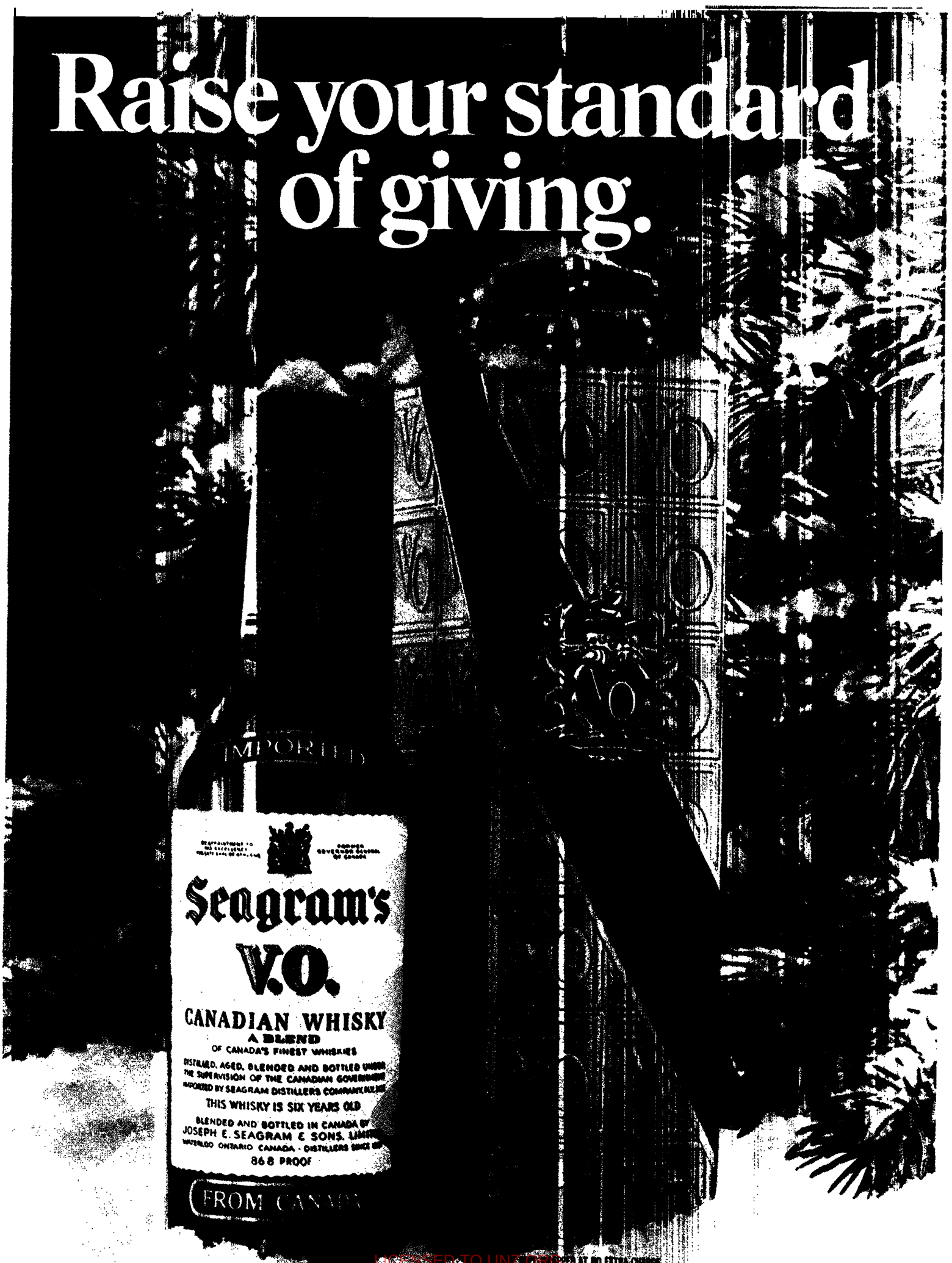

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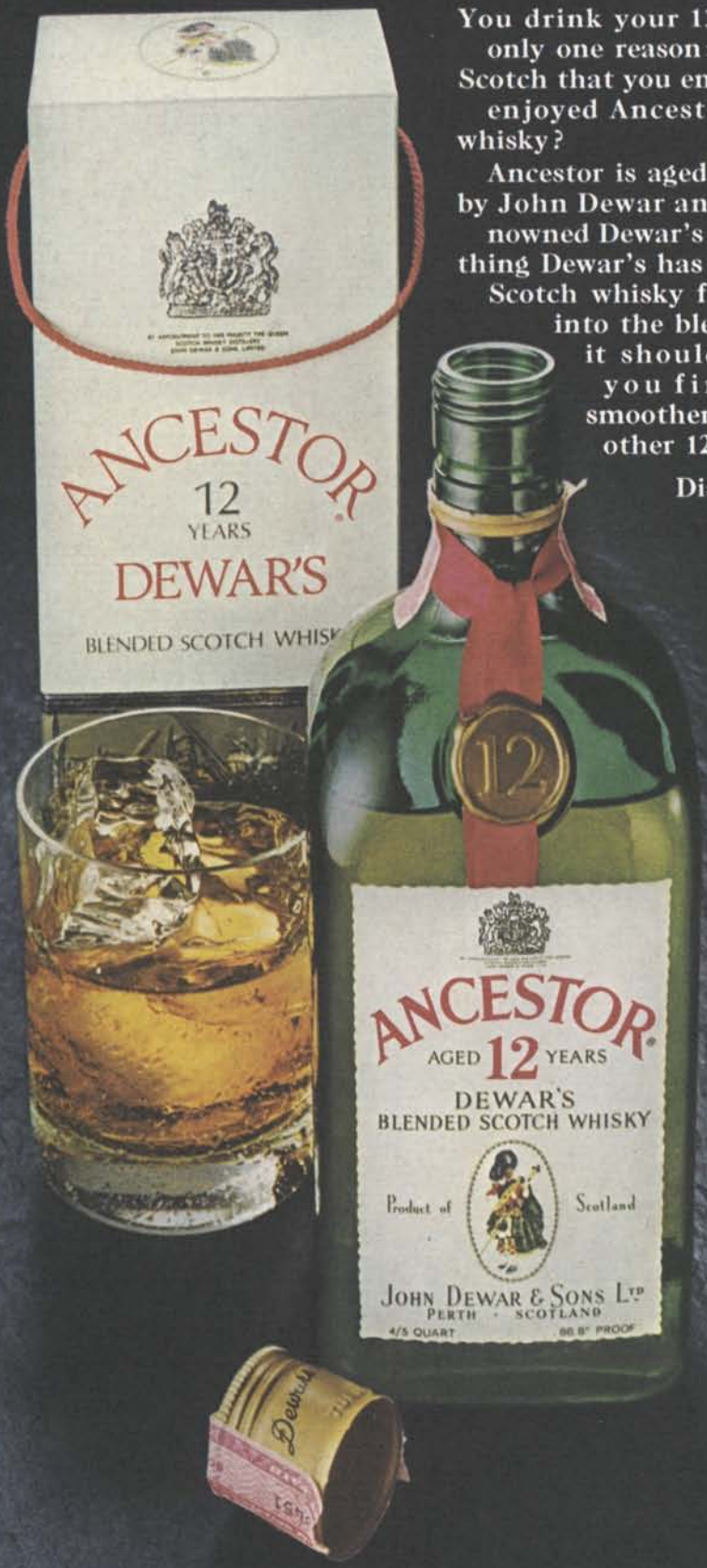

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